RONICLE



Thursday, December 7, 2017

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CRIME BLAMED N POLICE CUTS

Report by Jamie Brassington

A COUNCILLOR has blamed a crimewave in Halesowen on the Government's police cuts.

Crime is up 14 per cent in the town, say police, with burglaries and car

thefts the most common offences. Councillor Hilary Bills says cutting back on

police means low-key crimes go undetected be-cause officers are too stretched to investigate. The Government has slashed a £145 million from West Midlands Police budget since 2010, which means thousands fewer officers.

The Labour councillor, who represents Halesowen North, said: "The number of police officers are being drastically reduced. Police told



us at a community forum meeting that crime is already up by 14 per cent in Halesowen, and it is

"If people have a bur-glary I don't think police even turn up to that, they just give you a crime reference number

She added: "There used to be one ward that Hale-**Cllr Hilary Bills** sowen police looked after, but now there are five."

Councillor Bills explained that Halesowen police now look after an extra electoral ward in Cradley and Wollescote, as well as Halesowen North, Halesowen South, Belle Vale, Hayley Green and Cradley South. But West Midlands Police say this would not affect them as the force covers the whole of West Midlands.

Network

The crime surge in Halesowen has seen businesses set up a radio network as part of the Halesowen Business Improvement District to warn each other about thieves. West Midlands Police and Crime Commis-sioner, David Jamieson, has called on the Gov-

sioner, David Jamieson, has called on the Government to urgently address police numbers. He said: "West Midlands Police has had its budget cut by £145m since 2010. It means we operate with 2,000 fewer officers than we did just seven years ago. As a result our officers are becoming increasingly stretched."

Halesowen and Rowley Regis MP James Morris said: "Over the last few months I have had meetings with Halesowen's inspector and the Chief Constable of West Midlands Police concerning a recent spike in crime. They have concerning a recent spike in crime. They have assured me that they have the resources to tackle this and are doing all they can to bring the culprits to justice."

SANTA AND HIS MAGICAL SLEIGH ARE ON THE WAY



Santa joins Ruby Hollis, aged eight, Tuliyah Sutton, four, and Hamidah Adams, six, with Halesowen and Rowley Regis Rotarians Steve Jones, Val Jones and Barry Wheeler for the annual Santa Sleigh trip on the streets of Halesowen, collecting for charities

CHRISTMAS has come early for children in Halesowen and Rowley Regis as Santa Claus has been touring neighbourhoods in his

Jolly Father Christmas is visiting house-holds handing out sweets and raising money for children's charities.

Halesowen and Rowley Regis Rotary Club launch the Santa sleigh ride each year in the weeks before Christmas.

Richard Ellis, who is a member of the group, said: "It is great to see children's faces light up when we come along the street.
"Our annual Santa sleigh brings the Christ-mas spirit each year."
It is a popular tradition that has become

well known in the local area.
Richard estimates the sleigh has been bringing festive cheer to families in the area for around 20 years.

On each ride, Santa and he will ride the sleigh, which is fitted onto a trailer towed by

The sleigh comes equipped with presents, lights and plays festive music.

Residents living in the area will be able to

see Santa on the run up to Christmas, as he visits different neighbourhoods.
Richard says the group have raised £7,000 in the past two years from the sleigh ride.

TELEVISION

College is venue for Dickinson show

A TOP TV auction show filmed at Hale-sowen College was shown on ITV yester-day (Wednesday) afternoon. Dickinson's Real Deal came to the col-

lege sports hall and viewers were able to

lege sports hall and viewers were able to watch the show at 3pm, then on catch-up. Filming covered dealers Ray Rutter, Micheal Hogben, Jon O'Marah and Simon Schneider looking at people's treasures. Elaine Cammies, college ommunity par-ticipation director, said: "We had lots of people attend to make it really successful."

COUNCIL

Fewer than 1-in-5 are using libraries

FEWER than one in five people are using libraries. Branches, including two in Halesowen and one in Cradley, are

in Halesowen and one in Cradley, are used by just 18 per cent of people. The figures come as the day-to-day management of Dudley borough's 19 libraries, as well as Dudley's archives centre, was transferred from the council to volunteers.

Decline – see page 5

HONOURS

Roy and RAF to get freedom of borough

THE RAF and a Black Country business-man are the latest names in line for the prestigious freedom of Dudley borough.

Dudley Council is set to bestow the honours on RAF Cosford and Roy Richardson

The move was approved by councillors at a meeting of the full council on Monday.

RAF Cosford next year marks the 80th year of the air force station and has a long association with the borough.

Roy Richardson is most famous for developing the Merry Hill shopping centre with his late brother Don.

INSIDE

IT'S A CRUELLA WINTER AT REP



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1. Tink often stops to say hello to Bob the goldfish

5. Tortoise Fred lives in the garden and just loves eating buttercups on the lawn



2. Teddy's confused between a dovecote and a dove cat



3. African pygmy hedgehog Flossy in her woolly nest



4. Bear loves to bite toes and chase around the garden



9. Olaf the rabbit was found in a carrier bag in a tree. Here he is with best friend Anya



10. Milo, a Staffie cross, came from the Dogs Trust and loves doing agility tricks

7. Together – four-year-old guinea pigs Billy and Tom share a very special bond

Toys R Us are to shut 26 stores

Cycle route

set to link

centre and

rail station

WORK has begun on a new cycle route linking Blackheath town centre and Rowley Regis railway station. The scheme is to create a route along

Avenue Road, the ring road and Archer Way with cycle lanes, new signs, a refuge for cyclists crossing the ring road and

dropped kerbs.
Work, started on Short Street on Friday and will start on Archer Way on Jan-uary 2, and is to be finished by March.

uary 2, and is to be finished by March.

The new Blackheath cycle route will link the town with the existing cycle route in Oldbury, which is also to be improved. Then a cycle link will be created along the A4034 Oldbury Ringway.

The new link and footpath

TOYS R Us has confirmed it has drawn up plans to close at least 26 UK stores, putting up to 800 jobs at risk.

The move will not affect Christmas

The move will not affect Christmas trading and the closures will not take place until spring.

The company employs around 3,350 people with 100 stores across the UK, including branches at Birchley Island in Oldbury and at Merry Hill shopping centre. These are to stay open by the Merry Hill store may be 'downsized'. The store at St Androws Partil Dark in Birming.

Hill store may be 'downsized'. The store at St Andrews Retail Park in Birmingham is due to close.

The company, which has made losses in the UK for seven of the last eight years, says it needs to transform the business. It comes as the toys and games chain is under growing pressure as millions of parents buy online.

Merry Hill shops were evacuated

PARTS of Merry Hill shopping centre were evacuated on Saturday due to a false alarm.

Shoppers were asked to leave parts of

the centre in Brierley Hill. The centre's Twitter account said: "This was a false alarm, no need for concern."

LAST CHANCE TO VOTE

READERS just have a few more days to pick their favourite in our pets photo competition.

8. Reeves and Mortimer who were always up to mischief when they were kittens

After weeks of being inundated with your treasured pictures of your beloved pets we ran the final shortlist for the first time last week, complete with a voting form for you to have your say on which one you think should

win.

Creatures as diverse as cats, dogs, guinea pigs, rabbits, hedgehogs and tortoises have all featured in the popular competition, which has brought home just how much love owners have for their prized pets – with nearly 500 pictures emailed in.

Proud

We are repeating the voting form again this week. But it is the last chance for readers to make their choice as all entries need to be in by Tuesday (December 12).

There was so much choice from the entries sub-mitted – and we appreciate the time taken by proud owners to take the snapshots of their pets – it was difficult for us to pick out the final 10 for the short-

list.

But now the time has come to make a decision.



PICTURE 2 PICTURE 3 PICTURE 4 PICTURE 5

PICTURE 10 □ front of our Christmas editions. There is also a £100 cash prize up for grabs. So please look closely at the 10 shortlisted pic-

tures and choose the one you think deserves the

prize and we will be counting up the votes next week.

PICTURE 6

PICTURE 7

PICTURE 8

PICTURE 9

they do all fit that description - but the best picture

itself, one that you would pick out if you saw it in

the paper.

The winner will be announced later this month with the best-loved picture being carried on the

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as arrests made in body by M54 case

THREE people have been arrested on suspicion of murder in the investigation into the disappearance of a man from Oldbury nine years ago.

Suriit Takhar was 37 when he was reported missing from his home by his family in October 2008.

Nearly seven years later maintenance workers found his remains at the bottom of an embankment near the M54 in Telford, on August 20, 2015. It led to a detailed forensic investigation next to the slip road of junction four of the M54 for Shifnal.

Two men, aged 50 and 47, and a 48-year-old woman were arrested on Tuesday morning from separate ad-

dresses in Handsworth.

Searches were being carried out at properties in Handsworth and Tel-

Detective Inspector Jim Munro, from the homicide team, said: "This is a significant development in this murder enquiry.

"We are determined to get the bottom of how Surjit met his fate and I would urge anyone with information which could assist our investigation to get in touch."

Family

Mr Takhar's devastated family have made public appeals for infor-mation to discover how he died. His ex-wife Lavina Sohl joined their twin daughters, Sohnia and Sohnay, in re-turning to the site where his remains were found to make a heartfelt plea last December.

Ms Sohl, of Willenhall, had been married to Mr Takhar for 14 years but the pair split up two years before he went missing.

Speaking at the time she said: "He's not the type of person who would go missing. There has to be someone who knows something."

Mr Takhar, who also has a son called Harry, worked as a delivery driver in the year before he went missing and was previously a laminator for Gurso Lining in Great Wyrley.

He was known as Skin amongst family and friends.

In January last year, following a full forensic examination, a DNA profile, along with dental records, police confirmed the remains found by the M54 were those of Mr Takha.

The homicide team can be contacted on 101 or call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Santa's on his way

HILLCREST School and Community College in Netherton holds a Christmas fair tomorrow afternoon (Friday), from 3.30 to 5.30. There will be a special appearance by Santa and his Elves. Hot turkey cobs available.

Breakthrough £10k repairs grant rescues church NEWS IN BRIEF



Saved - Holy Trinity Church in Old Hill

church has been saved after a donation of £10,000 for urgent repairs to the building's roof.

The National Churches Trust Re-

pair Grant will help fund work on the tower roof, clock and kitchen of Holy Trinity church in Old Hill.

Huw Edwards, trust vice-president, said he was 'delighted' and that the church would now be 'saved for the future'. He added: "At the heart of communities in cities, towns and villages, churches are a treasure trove of architecture, history and faith. I'm

This will help ensure that this historic church, which is extensively used for worship and community activities, remains open and at the service of local people."

Benefit

Holy Trinity is one of 93 churches and chapels in England, Wales and Scotland set to benefit from rescue Scotland of £680,230 from ...
tional Churches Trust.
The grade II listed building has

been in use for around 140 years and is said to serve more than 4,000 households

households.

Nick Gowers, vicar at Holy Trinity Church, said: "We are grateful to God for this grant from the National Churches Trust. Holy Trinity Church is a vibrant Christian community."

serving Old Hill and beyond."

The grant will secure the fabric of the tower roof and stonework and ensure the tower is structurally secure and water tight. The pyramid shaped lead roof will be replaced and

Santas on the run for hospice

MORE than 700 Santas will take over a Stourbridge park this Sunday to for a fun run raising money for the Mary Stevens Hospice. The Santa Jog is an annual event which sees supporters run 5k around Mary Stevens Park, in aid of the Hagley Road charity.

Last year a record number took part in the event with more than 600 San-tas. More than 700 people have reg-istered for the 2017 run, including a

family fun day.

Meanwhile, last weekend around
150 participants took part in a Santa
Dash around Wolverhampton's West Park in aid of the Sedgley-based Beacon Centre for the Blind.

MP opens a new post office branch

STOURBRIDGE MP Margot James has cut the ribbon at the opening of a post office in Quarry Bank High Street, some ten years after the previous branch closed.

The Conservative MP, who is also Small Business Minister, opened the new Quarry Bank Post Office at Premier Stores, in High Street, last week. Postmaster Naranjan Kaur, who has run the store since 2004, said: "Customers are really pleased to have a Post Office on their doorstep, making life easier, especially as the branch is open seven days a week." is open seven days a week

Eniov cake with mayor in parlour

PEOPLE can enjoy a slice of cake while raising money for the Mayor's charities at a charity coffee morning tomorrow (Friday).

The event, held in the Mayor's Par-

The event, nead in the Mayor's Par-lour at Dudley Council House, sees the sale of cakes and the raffling of donated items to raise money for the Mayor's charities. Mayor, Councillor Dave Tyler and his wife, Barbara will be hosting the event, 10am to 1pm.

A two-year calendar designed by students at Dudley College will also be on sale for £10, featuring photographs and paintings of the borough.

Families are invited to nativity and Christingle

QUINTON Methodist Church holds its annual nativity and Christingle

rvice on Sunday.

The family service at 11am will welcome people from throughout the community, even those who may never have set foot in a church before, and will be followed by a children's party with a visit by Santa.

There will be coffee and mince pies at the church on Ridgeway Avenue, opposite the cinema.

Hospital payout over op that left player in agony

AN amateur footballer who was left in agony following a botched knee operation has revealed his plight af-

ter securing a five-figure payout.
Tomas Adams, from Oldbury, needed treatment when he felt his knee 'pop' while playing football in 2013 and required anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction.

The 27-year-old underwent surgery at the private West Midlands Hospital in Halesowen but would go through two years of hell as he continued to suffer problems with his knee af-

An MRI scan in January 2015 showed the graft had not been positioned correctly. The scan revealed evidence of a re-tear and Mr Adams decided to launch legal action against Ramsay Health Care UK Operations Limited, arguing that there were a series of failings in his treatment.

Devastated

While further surgery in March 2015 was successful, revision will be needed.

Mr Adams said he now wants to move on, adding: "You put great trust in medical experts when you suffer injuries of this nature, so I was devastated when I discovered there had been failings in my care. failings in my care.

"I just want to move on with my life.

Ashley Cocker, the medical negligence law-yer at Irwin Mitchell, who represented Mr Adams, said: "This is an incredibly worrying case where our client suffered following negli gent surgery.

gent surgery.

"Our client's graft was not positioned correctly. Standards of care fell below the required standard and it is vital that such issues are never repeated.

A spokesman for Ramsay Health Care said: "We are unable to comment on the specific details of this case which was settled over 12

months ago in September 2016.
"We take any incident extremely seriously and ensure that lessons are learned so that we can deliver the highest standard of care for our patients.

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Thief will be really brassed off



Antiques dealer Phil Sims, left, hands the instrument back to a grateful musician John Shepherd

WHEN a tenor horn worth around £1.500 was stolen from the car of a Salvation Army member on Re-membrance Sunday, the band did

membrance Sunday, the band dd not expect to see it again. Then the Cradley Heath branch received a call from an antiques dealer believing he had been sold the missing instrument, from someone claiming it had belonged to their grandfather. The horn, which was due to be played at a Remembrance Service

in Cradley Heath on the day it was stolen, turned up at a second-hand shop in Blackheath.

Salvation Army members had been calling shops in the area on

the off-chance it may have been offered for sale. They were then contacted by antiques dealer Phil contacted by antiques dealer Phil Sims. Mr Sims, from Clent, runs Sims Vintage Antiques Centre in Warwickshire but was standing in at his nephew's shop on the day the instrument was brought in.

He explained: "My nephew called asking what instrument I had bought as somebody had been in to ask whether anybody had been offered a brass instrument."

Deen offered a orass instrument.

The police have now been contacted regarding the theft of the horn and have a description now Mr Sims described being sold the instrument by aged in his 20s, of slim build with short dark hair. "He said he had inherited it from his grandfather" added Mr Sims. his grandfather," added Mr Sims.



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Vicious thief who beat up a pensioner was tracked down

A VIOLENT robber who knocked a pensioner unconscious in Birmingham has been jailed for more than five years after being tracked down to Stourbridge.

Kenny Field, of Crambourne Close, Rubery, punched the 72-year-old man in the head more than 20 times in an unprovoked 6am attack on Redhill Road, West Heath. The pensioner was left with a fractured eye socket. It came after Field had already smashed another resident's window in nearby Forrell Grove,

proposed for

traveller camp A SHORTLIST of locations for a travellers' holding camp in Dud's

ellers' holding camp in Dudley has been revealed with four of the ten po-

tential sites being in Lve and three in

tential sites being in Lye and three in Coseley.

The shortlist, ranked in order of the most likely sites are: Budden Road, Coseley; Bott Lane, Lye; the former Helix Factory, Bott Lane, Lye; Webb Street, Coseley; Blowers Green Road, Dudley; Thorns Road, Lye; Fountain Lane/Budden Road, Coseley; Clinic Drive in Lye; Delph Lane, Withymoor; The Straits, Gornal.

Coseley East ward councillor Melvyn Mottram warned there would be a backlash from residents.

Council leader Councillor Patrick Harley said: "We will be holding events in the community to explain why the site is required. We really do need to do something now to stop so many of our parks and open spaces

many of our parks and open spaces being targeted by travellers."

Ten sites are

West Heath, the same morning.
The 31-year-old thug fled with only a torch following the robbery on January 19 and was identified as the prime suspect following a trawl of CCTV cov-

reage in the area.

He moved out of Birmingham to try to avoid being caught but officers tracked him down to an address in Hob Green Road, Stourbridge, where

he was arrested.

Field was convicted of robbery and criminal damage at Birmingham Crown Court. He was also found to be in breach of a restraining order and sentenced to a total of five-and-a-half years imprisonment.

years imprisonment.
Detective Constable Paul Jauncey, from Force CID, said: "This was a needlessly violent attack which left the victim with sickening head injuries. It was a relentless and cowardly assault by Field who tried to avoid justice by fleeing the area. However, through diliteral details and the property of igent detective work we were able to track him down.

"Field refused to give a reason for

"Held refused to give a reason for the attack and only responded with 'no comment' answers during interview. "It is not just the physical but psy-chological damage such an assault can cause and Field will now have plenty of time to reflect on his cowardly actions now his freedom has been removed."

Tributes are paid to former mayor



Mrs Pat Martin - former mayor and honarary alderman of Dudley bor-

TRIBUTES have been paid to a former Mayor of Dudley. Patricia Martin, known as Pat, was a former councillor for Amblecote and also an honorary alderman.

Mrs Martin was rare in that she had also served as mayor in a different part of the country. She served on North Bedfordshire Borough Council from 1974 to 1983, and was Mayor of Kempson in Bedfordshire for two consecutive

Kempson in Bedfordshire for two consecutive years.

A teacher, she had gone on to work as deputy headmistress at an English speaking school on Spain's Atlantic island of Gran Canaria until her retirement and move to Stourbridge. In 2000 she was elected to Dudley Council where she served representing Amblecote until she stepped down in 2015. Colleagues described her as enthusiastic, compassionate and someone who worked tirelessly for her constituents.

Mrs Martin was elected Mayor of Dudley for 2009/10. having been deputy previously. Her late

2009/10, having been deputy previously. Her late husband Bill, for whom Pat cared later in life, enjoyed his role as Mayor's consort and the two were devoted to one another.

were devoted to one another.

Pat also served on the council cabinet as lead member for personnel, legal and property as well as holding numerous key committee memberships during her period of local government service. She was made an Honorary Alderman of Dudley in 2015.

Councillor Patrick Harley, leader of Dudley Council said: "Pat was well liked and well-respected across the whole of the council chamber. She was intelligent, vocal and had a great sense of humour. She'd fight for what she believed in and you knew she was doing it with honesty, integrity and spirit." tegrity and spirit."

She is survived by two children from her first

marriage, Simon and Lyndsey

Millions raked in by council parking fees

ALMOST £5 million in profit was raked in from parking charges during 2016-17 across the Black Country and Staffordshire, an increase of almost

five per cent on the previous year.

The figures, which were compiled by the RAC, represent income from by the RAC, represent income from parking charges and penalty notices with running costs deducted. They showed the four Black Country authorities and four Staffordshire councils brought in £4.99m over the last

cus prought in £4.99m over the last, year, up from £4.75m the year before.

Wolverhampton had the highest total in the region, £1.4 million in 2016-17, although that amount was £474,000 down on last year.

Lichfield recorded a surplus of \$1.18m a clicht invasce on the pre-

Lichfield recorded a surplus of £1.18m, a slight increase on the previous year, while Walsall Council profited to the tune of £492,000 – an increase of 192 per cent on 2015-16. In Dudley, the local authority made £435,000 profit, up 14.8 per cent, and Sandwell Council brought in £430,000, a rise of 35 per cent. South Staffordshire District Council saw a £75,000 drop in parking charges over the last year.

Across England, councils generated £819m from parking fees and fines in 2016-17, an increase of 10 per cent on the previous year. The Local Govern-ment Association said parking charge surpluses were spent on 'essential transport projects'.

Park runners' coffee shop helped charities

ORGANISERS at Dudley Parkrun ORGANISEES at Dudiey ParkTun have made donations to Mary Stevens Hospice and Russells Hall Hospital Georgina Unit after setting up a char-ity coffee shop. The volunteers behind the free weekly run set up a pop-up coffee shop every Saturday in recent months, which has raised hundreds of pounds for local causes. Visit www. of pounds for local causes. Visit www.parkrun.org.uk/dudley website.

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The day-to-day management of the borough's 13 libraries, as well as Dudley's archives centre, has been transferred from the council to volunteers.

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), a charitable social enterprise, has now taken over the running of Dudley borough's libraries.

The council said GLL would be tasked with 'introducing innovative ways of working to generate income to reinvest into the service, update facil-ities and expand the range of services on offer' at a time when the number of people using libraries continues to fall. It will also be 'expected to make financial savings for the council without impacting on day-to-day service'.

Transferred

All library staff will be transferred to the organisation.

A report revealed the council was considering creating 'community access points', possibly in shops or churches, due in part to the fall in usage of libraries.

usage of noraries.

Labour's Councillor Ken Finch is concerned. He said: "This is what happened with community centres. They withdrew professional support and unfortunately the volunteers haven't got the expertise to run finance and things like that."

Councillor Peter Miller, cabinet member responsible for libraries, said: "Libraries and archives are a fantastic community resource and our new partnership with GLL is about making sure they stay that way."

Chris Symons, Director of Development at GLL, said: "We are looking forward to bringing our wealth of experience in libraries management to Dudley to improve the service."

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Volunteers take over libraries as use declines FEWER than one in five people are using libraries across Dudley. Libraries in the borough are used by just 18 per cent of people and the decline in usage of libraries has caused concern among council bosses. The decidence of the control of the council bosses of the control of the council bosses of the after robbery at Dudley shop

Sam may say Noel's his no1 rock 'n' roll star



Budding rock 'n' roller Sam Fisher impressed Noel Gallagher (inset), formerly of Oasis, with a cheeky plea to join him on stage SCHOOLBOY Sam Fisher got more than he could have dreamed off when

he wrote to his hero Noel Gallagher. Not only did the Kinver High School pupil get a reply from the former Oasis star but he has also been invited to

star but he has also been invited to meet Noel backstage when he plays at Arena Birmingham in May. Thirteen-year-old Sam wrote to Noel asking if he would come and speak at his school. Within 24 hours of posting his letter it had been shared on Instagram by the rocker and liked by

tens of thousands of fans around the world. Although Sam's invitation was declined, a further letter prompted an offer of backstage passes for the Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds gig. Sam, from Caunsall, said: "Our

teacher said write to anyone you want to about coming in to do a talk about whatever you want."

whatever you want."
Sam's handwritten letter said: "I am
a big fan of yours. My class have been
searching the topic of drugs in PSHE
and (I know you are now clean) would

like to hear about how you turned it around

around.

Noel shared it on Instagram saying: "Thanks for the offer Sam but as much as I'd love to come and regale your PSHE class with war stories from your FSHE class with war stories from the 90s I'm gonna have to pass as I'm currently in re-hab . . . I mean the stu-dio!!!" In a second letter Sam said it was his dream to play with Noel. Noel replied: "Blimey, you don't want much do you, eh?" Sam has been contacted

Dudley have been locked up.

The four thugs burst into the Super Stop shop in Priory Road, Dudley, armed with an axe, a metal spirit level and a wooden stave on May

12, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

The spirit level was slammed down with such force by one of the masked The spirit level was slammed down with such force by one of the masked raiders that it carved a three inch groove in the counter, revealed Mr Jonathan Barker, prosecuting. Two other gang members started loading a holdall with cigarettes, cash and alcohol.

The thieves snatched a handbag belonging to the owner's niece, who was about to go on holiday. It was thrown to Aiden Jenkins, the only robber not masked, who was acting as look-out. He removed her £1,000 holiday money and the key fob for her car. The gang escaped in a Citroen Picasso without

escaped in a Citroen Picasso without number plates that was found dumped in a car park. They got into a taxi but had been spotted by witnesses and the cab was surrounded by police cars, explained Mr Barker. Brad Arnold dropped the stolen car key fob as Lee Pritchard tried to hide the cash.

Justice

An ice axe, face coverings and gloves were found in a ruck sack. Stolen alcohol and cigarettes were also recovered. Judge Simon Ward told the defendants: "You had a range of weapons and a planned exit. It almost worked but, luckily for justice, it did not." Father-of-one Arnold, aged 20, from Beechwood Road, Kates Hill, and Kyle Dingley, 19, of Victoria Road, Cradley Heath, both admitted robbery and possession of a bladed article. Both were jailed for six years and nine months. Jenkins, 20, of Hilary Drive, Warstones, and Lee Pritchard, 24, of Gloucester Road, Netherton, were both convicted of the two offences after trial. They were sentenced to seven years detention and ten years seven years detention and ten years

Measles spark vaccine alert

that they, their children and teenagers have had two doses of MMR vaccine following confirmation of cases of measles in the West Midlands. Public Health England is working

with councils and local NHS partners to make sure that anyone who needs an MMR vaccination is aware. Most of the recent cases reported had not received the required two doses. Consultant in Health Protection

with Public Health England West Midlands, Dr Bharat Sibal, said those affected were all recovering but it was important to be aware that measles could be a very serious illness and lead

to severe complications.

He said: "Measles is a highly-infectious viral illness. If you think you could have measles, it is really important to stay away from areas where you could come into contact with lots of other people.



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IN MY VIEW

Fairytale complaint just load of nonsense

SARAH Hall has asked for the fairytale Sleeping Beauty to be banned from her son's school, in case it corrupts the six-year-old's mind. She is particularly un-happy that the handsome prince kisses the heroine while she is asleep.

"It's a specific issue about sexual be haviour and consent," she says.

Perhaps it's me, but don't these people have dirty minds? The story has been read to children for the past 700 years, yet no-one else has seen it as being about sexual behaviour and consent.

It does make one think about how many classic fairytales are acceptable in today's puritanical, politically-correct

Society.

Hansel and Gretel is obviously out.

For a start they live in a house made of marzipan and sugar, hardly conducive to a healthy diet. And the "wicked stepmother" does not reflect how society is enriched by today's diverse range of familv types. And surely you can't go around

Ily types. And surely you can't go around pushing witches into the oven, can you? A hate crime at the very least.

Then there's Little Red Riding Hood. I mean what sort of mother allows their young daughter to go walking on her own through the woods? That's a surefire case of child neglect. And the bit about killing the wolf? Animal cruelty at the very least

As for Snow White and the Sever Dwarfs, well where do we begin? Dwarf ism, modern slavery, and it is sure to put children off getting their five a day. Just don't go there.

NEW figures revealing how much mon-ey local councils make from car parking

charges make fascinating reading.

Dudley Council took £435,000 last year, Sandwell Council £430,000, Walsall £492,000 and Wolverhampton £1.4 million. Sounds a lot but look at it another way. The figures amount to $\mathfrak{L}1.40$ per head per year in Dudley and Sandwell, about $\mathfrak{L}1.80$ a year in Walsall and about £5.50 in Wolverhampton. Given the choice, I'm sure most people would sooner pay an extra couple of guid a year on the council tax than have to fiddle with a pay-and-display meter every time they go shopping, and stress over whether their ticket will expire before the baddie in the silly uniform comes round to dish out the fines

The £435,000 Dudley made is also little more than a seventh of the money the council spent on the questionable market place refurbishment a few years ago.

The landlord is no longer there to sort things out



Meghan Markle - majority of the public don't care about her being mixed-race



Dame Glynis Breakwell's downfall is an



Housing ladder can lead to new troubles

THERE is a myth among millennials that once you are on the housing ladder all your troubles end. So it was illuminating to come across a column a few days ago by a first-time buyer who admits: "When it's your name on the mortgage, the buck stops with you . . . you'll never have any money ever again." There followed a bleak tale of things going wrong and a dodgy tradesman relieving him of £1,000. That's how it is, kids. Owning your own place brings some security but much expense, and the words "the landlord will sort it out" vanish like a comfort blanket chucked in a bin.

A READER tells me he has heard one American reporter referring to "Prince Hairy." Expect more of the same. The US and UK are two nations divided by a common language. The Yanks also have a strange approach to names. On a trip to Texas in the 1980s, I had great difficulty convincing our hosts that no-one in England ever referred to the Prince of Wales and his wife as Chuck and Di.

AM I hopelessly out of touch, or am I right in thinking that the vast majority of the Great British Public don't give a flying fig about Meghan Markle being mixed-race? We have surely moved on from all this. We may not yet be the ultimate colour-blind society but we are getting there. So what possible motive lies behind an outburst such as this from the Guerdin. outburst such as this, from the Guardian, that greeted Monday's engagement announcement: "From Victoria and Abdul to Harry and Meghan Markle, our society is still obsessed with 'purity' and is shocked that a royal could marry a per-

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

son of colour." I'm not sure what the Guardian means by "our society" or "purity" but it's not the society I recognise and it's not the society where I and most Brits live, or would wish to

THE Church of Sweden is urging its clergy to use gender-neutral language and avoid referring to God as "He." There is a tiny theological problem here, namely that Jesus repeatedly refers to lem nere, namely that Jesus repeatedly refers to God as male. I haven't counted this myself but I am told in John's Gospel alone, Jesus calls God "Father" no fewer than 156 times, which seems pretty conclusive. Still, when the gender-police are in full cry, who would dare to suggest that the New Testament might be gospel?

YOU can get away with being paid £486,000 a year if you work in a bank or stock exchange where everybody else earns £486,000. You will stride together in one vast, elevated herd, like giraffes on the savannah. However, if you are earning £486,000 and everyone around you earns a tiny fraction of that amount, you become like one isolated giraffe in a herd of become like one isolated giraffe in a herd of snappy little mongooses (mongese?). Even-tually, the little creatures will gang up on you, bite your ankles and bring you crashing down. Dame Glynis Breakwell has quit as vice-chan-

an object lesson in the awesome power of free speech, a free press, natural justice and, above all, envy. I predict a sudden drop in the number of vice-chancellors asking for a wage rise.

BUT don't shed too many tears. Breakwell is not resigning in the sense that you or I might understand. She will not stand down until next August and will then spend the following six months on what you and I call a paid holiday but academia calls a sabbatical.

THE Government was apparently surprised at the initial lack of outrage about Britain having to pay £50 billion or so to leave the EU. I suspect pay £30 billion or so to leave the EU. I suspect this is because many years of indifferent education have created a nation which doesn't really know what 50 billion is. Adding to the confusion is the fact that many older folk were taught in their schooldays that a billion was a million million. So own up. Is 50 billion 50,000,000,000,000, 50,000,000 or 50,000,000,000,000,7 and how many pulling areas can vou got on the cide of many million zeros can you get on the side of

DICKENSIAN, screened over the last festive period, was probably the second-best costume drama the BBC has ever made. Its only flaw was to be shown in brief 30-minute episodes which hardly gave you time to settle down with a glass of porter and a muffin to enjoy the Vic-torian ambience. Netflix is now reshowing the series but has edited them into chunky and very satisfying one-hour episodes. Excellent

TALKING POINT

Just one tweet away from the vilest abuse

THE internet has transformed society since we said farewell to the 20th century, but at what cost?

but at what cost?

Has social media made Britain a more cohesive country? Have we entered a new golden age where reunited friends and digitally connected communities work for the common good?

Or have we plummeted into a new dark

age inhabited by hate-filled trolls, Z-list bloggers and clickbait content that ap-

peals to the darker impulses.

If you use social media you are only ever one ill-judged Tweet away from a torrent of hate from those who seek the slightest pretext, usually an expression of opinion they do not agree with, to spew

out the vilest abuse and threats.

Pornography has become easily available and degraded many. Yes, there are parental controls, but any curious kid can get round those and it only takes one in a peer group to show such images to their mates. It's actually changed the main-stream, so programmes like Love Island can flourish and some think it's actually

can incursin and some trillik its actually funny to buy their pre-teen daughter a T-shirt with the slogan Future Porn Star. The new Wiki-world offering a wealth of free information was supposed to make us better informed but instead many seem content to live in a bubble, only listening to views that chime with their own opinions and prejudices.

Meanwhile, the Tweeter in chief, a self-promoting self-obsessed New York property developer whose brand was enhanced by a reality TV show, has been propelled into the White House by a wave of hyperlinked hyperbole – allegedly with the help of considerable social media manipulation from the Kremlin. Trump is the ultimate icon of this new age of nar-

cissism.

Take a look around... families sat at dinner tables staring at their phones rather than speaking to each other, people apparently talking to themselves whilst walking down the street, even having an-imated loud arguments with people who are not physically present. It looks weird because it is weird. Meanwhile, the internet giants get rich-

er by stealing your information, dodging taxes and siphoning away revenue from traditional media (including local newspapers).

I know you can't put the digital genie back in the bottle but we've got to consider where this is taking us before Trump is trumped by something even more dan-LEON BURAKOWSKI

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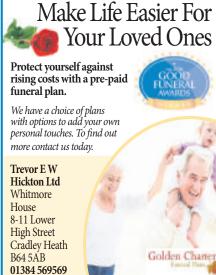
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Trains would be more useful than trams

er of Dudley Council, said: "This is a would be more fiscally responsible, real game changer for Dudley – the quicker to achieve and help many more Metro is vital to the town and the bor- people. ough's economy."

It is indeed a game changer to

out slow 'bus on rails' trams on the UK's last remaining, unused with 'everything is there bar the trains' principal main line railway. Such stupidity has never been even

attempted anywhere else in the world! Millions to dig up the roads to move the cables and pipes before the tram tracks can be laid – to a ghost town on

Dudley town centre has moved to Castle Gate – exactly where the much-needed main line railway station sits – with the innovation centre soon to be put on top. This is the only feasible site tion bites the dust!

and inept transport bosses have been returning, anytime soon, between now top of the hill.

Returning the trains to the UK's roads, for retail, housing estates and last, half completed, main line railway, industrial units. Since the 1990s, even

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

ipso.

story, write to The Editor, Chronicles, 51-53 Queen

Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

POST

Dudley Chronicle, Chronicle Editorial, 51-53 Queen Street Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

Code of Practice: Our policy is to correct errors as soon as we can.
The Chronicles adhere

to the Editors' Code of Practice, which can be seen at www.ipso.

co.uk. If you are unhap-py with the accuracy of a

3kms of urban double track railway line and one of Wolverhampton's main line stations!

Our stupid transport bosses and planners have been doing the equiva-lent of putting London Underground trains on the London to Paris HS1 line! With us, it is a slow, local, frequent for the railway station. Yet more road stopping, six trams an hour service, on and railway congestion as another staof a half completed 120km main line The UK lacks capacity on its rail-railway. But that prevents the fast, way network because the thoughtless regional and national trains from ever and the end of the

In need of better managers

PRODUCTIVITY gap – here we go again! Britain is lagging behind our competitors in terms of industrial output per employee. So what does the Government suggest as a solution? More railways and motorways.

and more good managers.

A manager's role is to create an environment of care and trust among employees. Employees respond to receiving respect, with hopes of gaining promotion through their capabilities. Too many managers seek to motivate by criticism and shouting, actions which

Considering the Conservatives' claim to be the party of business, they have no idea about boosting productivity. In any organisation, success starts at the top. Good management alone can boost output. We need fewer roads and railways

cause low productivity.

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Motorists may have blue badge

SUBJECT parking outside Russells Hall Hospital I refer to the letter by Peter Cole of Kingswinford (Chronicle, November 30).

I always look forward to reading his correspondence, but I can't see where he is coming from with regard to the inconsiderate parking he states, along the road outside the hospital.

He even goes on to say that cars parked there should be fined £200 and their cars crushed. Surely Peter must realise

Surely Peter must realise that the motorists that park on the double yellow lines on this stretch of road are parking legally if they have a blue badge and that they park within the hours stated

park within the hours stated on the sign displayed on the footpath?

The traffic warden he saw was presumably checking that the cars were display-ing the blue badge.

BOB WHITEHOUSE Kingswinford

AS the retired Standard Bearer for Brierley Hill I would

Remembrance pride

like to thank all those, old and young, who attended this year's parade and service at the cenotaph and church (St Michael's) on Remembrance Sunday. The attendance was remarkable and reflected what remembrance means to the people of Brierley Hill and district. The girls and boys with their leaders and team vicar Reverend Simon Archer were immaculate in dress and behaviour. Our sincere thanks go to the adult leaders and young members, members of the emergency services and to our new standard bearer (well done Stuart), also the bugler who turns up every year, and the church workers led by Reverend Archer. RON GREENFIELD

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Museum staff Alison Hyatt and Anne Willetts get ready for the Candelit Christmas at Haden Hill House and Old Hall

STAFF and volunteers at a mas traditions," said Anne Willetts, popular Black Country attraction have been decking the halls with holly and ivy ready for the annual candlelit Christmas event which takes place tonight (Thursday).
The event at Haden Hill House

Museum and Haden Old Hall in Cradley Heath is from 6.30pm to

"It has become a festive favourite and part of many local people's Christvisitor services assistant at the house.
"Visitors can turn up and enjoy both beautiful houses dressed for the season and bathed in candlelight.

son and bathed in candlelight.
"In the Victorian house the dining table will be laid ready for Christmas dinner and lit with beautiful candelabras and visitors can join in the Christmas sing-a-long in the drawing room, or help the servants make paper chains for the servants' quarters."
Meanwhile, in the 17th Century Old Hall visitors can enjoy real greenery and a Tudor Christmas with old fashioned festivities.

ioned festivities

"It is a fantastic way to forget the chaos of Christmas shopping and just relax into the festive season with some traditional Christmas cheer," added Alison Hyatt, Visitor Services Officer.

Light festive refreshments available will be available in the tearoom, courtesy of The Friends of Haden Hill

The event costs £3 to both houses or £2 concessions and there is no need to

There is also a family fun day on De cember 17 from 11am to 3pm.
For more information visit www

sandwell.gov.uk/ioinin museums



and his team completed the installation and tiling to a perfect finish... Thank You." **Wayne & Julie,** *Wordsley*

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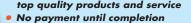
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a laughing emoji.

The comment landed Ms Millard in hot water with college bosses, who launched disciplinary proceedings. She was suspended from her role last week after the post from the October trip came to light. At a hearing on Friday she received a 'serious sanction'.

Hasty

Principal Lowell Williams said Ms Millard's actions were 'poorly judged'. Several senior members of staff took part in the visit to India as part of Dudley College Worldwide, a develop-

Dudiey College worldwide, a develop-ment programme.

Mr Williams said: "Claire Millard is an exemplary member of staff, who has worked for Dudley College for 12 years. Yet three ill-advised words, typed hastily in response to a post on her personal Facebook page have very nearly cost Claire her job and ended

ner personal racebook page nave very nearly cost Claire her job and ended her productive career. "Unfortunately Claire's response was hasty and poorly judged. It is clear that this comment, particularly if taken out of context, has the poten-tial to offend. At best it is culturally and politically insensitive

and politically insensitive.

"Claire had no need to post this image on her personal Facebook page and should not have done so. We have delivered many training sessions to staff on the appropriate use of social media and, of course, have a written policy – but it is clear to me that we

need to do more." Ms Millard did not comment.

Lorry driver is jailed after M6 horror crash paralyses man

Halesowen firm beats big names in tech



EBC Group, based in Halesowen, won UK Managed Service Provider of the Year at the national SVC awards

A TECHNOLOGY company based in Halesowen is celebrating winning a national award for its work.

EBC Group won UK Managed Service Provider of the Year at the national SVC (Server, Cloud, Virtualisation) awards isation) awards.

Attended by a host of businesses from across the UK, the prestigious ceremony was held at the Hilton London in Paddington.

EBC Group's win highlights its development and expertise in the IT sector, and the services its has implemented throughout 2017, including work with Worcestershire-based solicitors Hallmark Hulme, Shropshire salad growers PDM Produce and property management group Mainstay.

salad growers FDM Froute and property management group Mainstay.
With 2017 seeing a large number of nominations and votes, competition was high, but EBC Group still topped

the poll above leading technology names to claim the winning title.

Group managing director of EBC Group Richard Lane said: "We couldn't be more thrilled to have won UK Managed Service Provider of the Year. To be recognised at a national level is a fantastic achievement for EBC Group, and a testament to the hard work and excellent service our team continues to deliver." team continues to deliver.

ries to a driver after ploughing into the back of his car has been jailed for two-and-a-half years.

Andrew Hallbrook failed to slow down approaching a tailback on the M6 and smashed into the back of Martin Brannigan's Vauxhall Insignia. The car was pushed under the trailer of a flatbed lorry in front with such force that the lorry hit another car and forced it into a fifth vehicle.

Mr Branningan, aged 56, from Sutton Coldfield, has been left paralysed from the shoulders down following the crash near junction 2 of the M6 on March 24. Hallbrook, 45, of Donnington Court,

pleaded guilty to causing serious injury by driving dangerously in October. At Warwick Crown Court on Friday he was jailed for two-and-a-half years and banned from driving for three years. Prosecutor Adam Western said that

according to collision expert Dean Spencer, Hallbrook was doing 55mph as he approached the queue and only braked 12 metres before the point of impact at 49mph.

Spinal

Mr Brannigan suffered damage to his spinal cord, was in hospital for seven months and is now paralysed from the shoulders down and is at risk of devel-

oping infections and osteoporosis.

Hallbrook, who was working for an agency and had not driven that vehicle before, claimed he had been momenbetore, claimed he had been momentarily blinded by the sun and he had reached for the sun visor before suddenly realising the vehicles ahead had braked. But his account was not supported by the other truck driver or the accident investigator.

accident investigator.

Mr Brannigan, an engineer, married with two children, said: "My injuries mean I will never walk again, which is devastating to me and to my family."



Lorry driver Andrew Hallbrook

Lorry driver Andrew Hallbrook
His wife Julie added: "Every ounce
of his dignity is taken away. What I
will miss most from my husband is
a kiss and a cuddle. This breaks my
eart."
Earl Pinnock, defending, said
Hallbrook, had spent 25 years as a
carer as well as being a foster carer.
Judge Sylvia de Bertodano said:
"There were warning on overhead
gantries for a mile and a half, as well
as cars in front slowing down, with
brake lights going on. I don't accept
for a minute that this was momentary inadvertence." tary inadvertence

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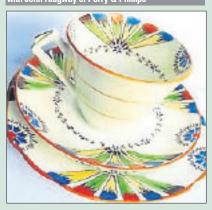
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FLETCHERS AT

Big turnout expected at our festive auction sale





IT was our Christmas auction this week and we were expecting a good turnout not just from collectors and dealers but from festive shoppers too! Yes, people have finally switched on to the idea that a

saleroom is the ideal place in which to buy that unique

You can find anything from a vintage stocking filler to a major present at auction, just make sure you view the items prior to the sale and maybe set yourself a budget at this rather expensive time of year.

It's good to come along with a gift wish-list rather

than relying on impulse buying although the perfect present may catch your eye just as it comes up for sale. Of course it all depends on who you are buying for

and their individual tastes but I'm sure you can find a vintage sale item to suit almost everyone.

Smaller gifts might include pieces of china, like trios

and vases, and items of silver such as candlesticks, dressing-table sets and photograph frames.



Jewellery is an obvious choice and you can pick up some very reasonably-priced pieces at the sale – go for gemstone items if you're limiting your festive spend.
Sporting memo-

rabilia is another favourite with the gift hunters, keen anglers were in for a treat at our December sale when a large number of taxidermy fish were ready to be netted.

Small items for the home always make nice presents, look out for wooden writ-

ing slopes, Tiffany-style lamps, pretty wooden stools, framed prints and vintage kitchenalia.

And for anyone really looking for a very unusual

present the saleroom was definitely the place to be on Tuesday, when a Victorian record player, in working order, was one of the star lots!

 Perry and Phillips hold valuation days, for sale items only, every Wednesday from 10am until 4pm.
 The next Perry and Phillips sale of antiques and collectables will take place at the Mill Street sale-room in Low Town, Bridgnorth, in February.

Viewing will take place during the weekend prior to the sale and on Monday and also from 10am on

- auction day
 New sale bidders are advised to attends the sale room early on auction day to register and be allocated a bidding number.

 • Perry and Phillips hold sales on the first Tuesday
- of every other month.

Don't feel guilty about wearing Christmas jumpers



Christmas pudding jumper

IT is now December and time to talk of all things Yuletide without **STYLE FOCUS** feeling guilty.

Do you have your Christmas knitwear ready for Christmas jumper day on December 15 th 2017?

The charity fundraising was started in 2012 and raises money for Save the Children, their slogan is 'Make the World better with a sweater' and the idea is to make, buy or borrow a festive jumper to wear and give £2 to

It has become an incredibly popular tradition with businesses large and small, retailers

It is expected that more than four million

people will get involved this year.

Businesses have fully taken this on board and are making the day a series of planned events to raise even more money.

Celebrities are getting involved to promote the various retailers who have a vast array

of exciting Christmas knitwear on offer and participating in their own fundraising events.

The high street shops from Primark and



B&M to M&S and the top designer outlets fill their stores with glittering, flashy and elab-orate garments. Lots of choice with a vast range of prices to suit every budget and there are garments for everyone from the tiniest

baby to the family dog.

Santa, snowflake and reindeers prove to be the most popular but the Scandinavian look is this years big winner, check out www. johnlewis.com, www.asos.com, but also www.amazon.co.uk and the supermarkets for some magingly original designs. amazingly original designs.

Нарру

The wonderful thing about Christmas jumper day is that it brings people together and makes most of us happy.

I notice that this year there are additional garments with a Christmas theme, printed Santa shirts and dresses, elf bags, reindeer

hats and tinsel scarves to name but a few, al-lowing more choice and fun with dressing up Be prepared for social media to be swamped

with endless photos.

Last year I insisted our house guests, and their dogs, came down to breakfast on Boxing

Day wearing a decorated jumper and it was a wonderful success.

It is not that many years ago when grandma gave us a hand-knitted Christmas sweater we packed it back in the wrapping and resigned it to the charity shop at the earliest oppor-

Find a fancy outfit, add a bit more embellishment, then add the finishing touches such as beard glitter and baubles, dangling rein-

deer and Christmas tree earrings, flashing Rudolph nose or LED light jewellery and be the star of the office this Christmas jumper day.

It is a little different from the suit and tie or
the little black dress and heels you will wear
to the office party!

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Stop winter wreaking havoc with your join



Cold weather can cause symptoms to flare up

WE'RE a nation that knows a thing or two about joint pain.

With around 10 million people suffering with arthritis, which can range from mild to severe, it's one of the

from mild to severe, it's one of the leading causes of disability in the UK. But while the condition is fairly common, it is rarely understood. 'Arthritis' isn't just one single disease, but actually relates to 100 different types of joint pain, which can range from a dull ache to crippling agony – and the arrival of colder, wintry weather often causes symptoms to flare up.

The good news is, there are things that can help manage – and perhaps even prevent – arthritis-related pain when the temperature drops, so sufferers can enjoy a more comfortable and merry Christmas. Here, Dr Sarah Brewer, medical director at Healthspan (healthspan.co.uk), gives us the Healthspan (healthspan.co.uk), gives us the lowdown on managing arthritis in winter.

What exactly is arthritis?

"The word arthritis literally means in-flammation of a joint," says Dr Brewer. "The most common type, osteoarthritis, involves degeneration of the articular car-tilage protecting the bone ends within a

Without cartilage protection, tendons and ligaments have to work harder, and severe loss of cartilage can lead to bone rubbing on bone, causing friction and eventual swelling

and inflammation.

Arthritis can also rear its ugly head when parts of a joint are wrongly identified as a 'foreign' threat and are attacked

By Liz Connor

by immune processes – which is the case with rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disease – and people with fibromyalgia can also suffer with arthritis. While far more common in older age groups, anybody, even

as statiet with artifities. While it into the common in older age groups, anybody, even children, can get arthritis.

"Other forms of arthritis include gout," says Dr Brewer, "septic (infective arthritis), psoriatic arthritis (associated with psoriasis) and reactive arthritis, which is where antibodies formed against an infection start to attack the joints."

What are the symptoms?

The first sign of osteoarthritis is typically the worst one: Pain. In the early stages, this can feel like a dull ache or a burning sensation. Often, you'll feel the pain after you've used the affected joint a lot, for instance, if you've been driving a car or walking up a flight of stairs.

Osteoarthritis usually affects the larger, weight-bearing joints, such as hips, knees

weight-bearing joints, such as hips, knees and the lower back, although the neck, fin-gers and toes may also be affected.

Rheumatoid arthritis is more likely to affect the whole body and is often associated with severe stiffness – it usually takes sufwith severe stiffness – it usually takes sufferers a long time to get their joints moving, especially in the morning – and the 'triggers' can be very different. Arthritis inflammation is associated with swelling too, and can eventually lead to deformity and loss of joint function over time, says Dr Brewer.

Is arthritis really worse in winter?

"Cold weather appears to make arthri-

tis pain worse for many people, although the reason is poorly understood," says Dr

Brewer.

"One possibility is that changes in musculoskeletal symptoms are related to falling
vitamin D levels during winter," she adds.

"Another factor could be that pain receptors become more sensitive when surrounding temperature receptors that detect cold
become presentiar."

become more active. So, how can you manage winter flare-ups?
When it's cold outside, one of the best

When it's cold outside, one of the best ways to keep joints happy is to cover them up – so make sure you're wearing thick layers and keep aching hands warm with gloves. While it's tempting to reach for the medicine cabinet whenever you feel a twinge of pain (it's always advisable to discuss your pain management needs with your GP), Dr Brewer says it might not necessarily be the best choice in the long run. ssarily be the best choice in the long run.

Swimming in a heated pool can help to soothe painful joints, and you can also find quick and easy relief from taking warm baths, according to the Arthritis Founda-

tion.

Relaxing in a steamy bubble bath just be fore bed can mean the difference between lying awake all night in pain or drifting off peacefully.

"A number of supplements and herbal

medicines can also help reduce joint pain," says Dr Brewer, "such as glucosamine and chondroitin, hydrolysed collagen, ginger, turmeric and krill oil. Turmeric for joint pain is best taken in the form of a solubilised liquid for maximum absorption."

Museum creates perfect mix for Christmas past



Sheila Chamberlain-Hyett mixes pastry for traditional mince pies at the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley

IT was the way they celebrated Christmas in an earlier era that still fills people with fes-

tive cheer today.

Thousands are flocking to the Black Country Living Museum on Tipton Road, Dudley, to sample the delights of an old-fashioned Christmas during the run-up to

the big day.

Christmas in the Home – complete
with Santa hunts – will run every

mas evenings with the 2,000 tickets for each already sold out. All the 300-a-day places on the hunt for Santa are also already filled with

for Santa are also already lined with some being snapped up as long ago as July and August.

Staff in costumes and volunteers were at six different houses at the museum to tell stories about the character they played and display festive skills from Victorian times as the

Saturday and Sunday from now until festive season got under way. These ranged from making plum pudding final week. There are also five Christmas evenings with the 2,000 tickets for each already sold out.

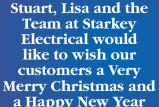
All the 300-a-day places on the hunt for Santa are also already filled with sold and the sold four in muslin and hanging it in bubbling water over a blazing fire for four hours through to dressing up a peg doll to producing a sweet-smelling pomander for the tree from an orange

and cloves.
Sheila Chamberlain-Hyett, a demonstrator for three years, said: "The kids of today get loads of presents and it is important for them to know it has not always been like that at Christmas."

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22nd - 26th	Torquay Winter Warmer	£159.50		HOLIDAY REUNION LIVERPOOL	£21	£21
FEBRUAR'	/		FEBRUA	<u>RY</u>		
12th-16th	Torquay Winter Warmer	£179.50	THU 1st	NEWARK ANTIQUES FAIR	£37	£36
12th-16th	Cornish Delights (Free bar 6-9pm)	£195.00	THU 1st	NATIONAL CIVIL WAR MUSEUM	£34	£33
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23rd-25th	York & Castle Howard	£195.00	TUE 27th	DIANA EXHIBITION - LONDON	£43.50	£39.50

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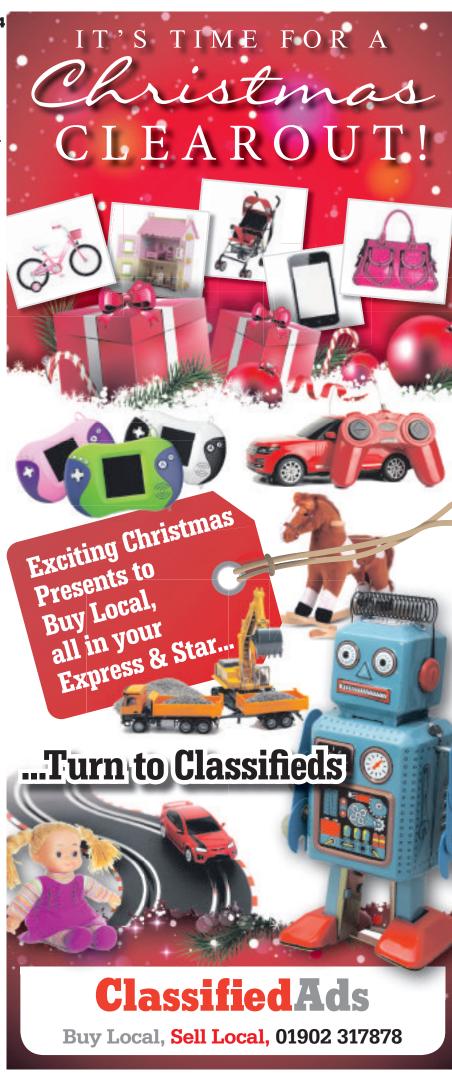
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Something for everyone at city's literary festival

STARS from Slade, Magnum and Only Fools and Horses are among the names lined up for the second Wolverhampton Literature Festival.

Headlining the three-day festival in January is award-winning writer Will Self as exclusively re vealed in The Chronicle.

But now the full programme has been revealed and boasts such famous names as Slade drummer Don Powell,

names as stade drummer Jon Poweil, Magnum keyboardist Mark Stanway, Only Fools and Horses actor John Challis and author Lynsey Hanley. More than 80 events are taking place at venues across the city in-cluding Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Northern Arts Coster, The Stele Newhampton Arts Centre, The Slade Rooms, Bantock House and The

Themes

Three themes are running through Three themes are running through the festival – music and literature, politics and journalism and community voices. With something for everyone there is set to be workshops, theatrical performances, debates and events for children.

The first Wolverhampton Literature Festival was held in January this year, headlined by author and journalist Sathnam Sanghera, and proved a huge success.

huge success.

huge success.
The aim is to build the event over the next five years and make it a permanent fixture in the calendar, after receiving Arts Council England funding up to 2022.
Wolverhampon Council is working

in partnership with the University of Wolverhampton and Express & Star on the festival.

For details of the full line-up visit www.wolvesliteraturefestival.co.uk



It's thumbs up as festivalgoers can hear about the history of Slade





Story contest is sheer poetry

BUDDING writers have a chance to Deadline is January 6. Email your be part of a Black Country literature festival. A short story writing compe-tition has been launched as part of the Wolverhampton Literature Festival

with the winner read out at the event.
Sister paper the Express & Star
last week launched the competition. last week launched the competition.
Judges will decide the winner, with the
story printed in the paper. It will be
read out at the festival by award-winning local author Paul Dowswell.
To enter writers can submit a story
on any subject of around 1,200 words.
It must be an original piece of fiction
and not an account of real events.

Deadline is January 6. Email your short stories to karen.baker@expressandstar.co.uk or post them to Editor's Secretary Karen Baker, Express & Star, Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES.

That competition is for over 16s although a Young Authors competition is running for key stage 2 and 3 pupils The winners will be turned into stage productions performed during the festival.There is also a poetry compefectival.There is also a poetry compe

festival. There is also a poetry competition with a £400 first prize with the theme 'Out of darkness cometh light'. The winner will have the opportunity to read at a festival event.

Sweet talk from guest

CHAIRMAN Liz Hubbard opened the November meeting and welcomed members and visitors before the October minutes were signed.

Details of a craft morning at Norton Community Centre were given and a musical afternoon at The Oakfield Community Centre, Brettell Lane will take place on Feb-ruary 21 at 2pm.

ruary 21 at 2pm.

The first Lunch Club outing of the new year will be at
The Bell, Kingswinford on
January 8. Coffee mornings
will resume in February.
At the Community Centre
Christmas bazaar on Saturday, Woodsley, TG, will you o

day, Wordsley TG will run a chocolate prize every time

Liz then introduced the speaker, chocolatier Jackie Smith who gave a very in-teresting and detailed talk and demonstration on the history, development and trading of the paste from the ground cacao seed.

Samples were handed round and a demonstration took place with Liz giving a hand in making chocolate lollipops! Liz gave the vote of thank for a very entertaining talk taining talk.

taining talk.

The next Guild meeting is on December 11 at 10am when Kath Reynolds will give a talk entitled 'Tis the Season to be Jolly where everyone can reminisce over Christmases past, the traditions, celebrations, favourite toys, cracker jokes etc. Meetings are at Wordsley Green Community Centre. Cost for visitors is £3 includ-

chocolatier Real Dad's Army Getting crafty for sensory bands

History given of



Margaret Morgan, Maureen Hall and Gaynor Ormerod THE guild is supporting Sedgley Morning TG

Alzheimer's Society as its charity of the year, and members have been busily knitting sensory bands.

These are sleeves that

to them and are used to calm patients with de-mentia or Alzheimer's by

Amblecote History Society

RAY Sturdy spoke at the November meeting on the Real Dad's Army. Ray was fortunate to inherit a diary his unate to inherit a diary h cle kept during his time as a volunteer in the London area which he related memories as a Local Defence Volunteer.

a Local Defence Volunteer.

On May 14, 1940, Anthony
Eden announced the formation of the LDV. Some 250,000
men aged between 17 and 65
who were not engaged in
military service, volunteered Army. LDV was renamed the Home Guard by Winston Churchill on July 22, 1940.

Ray kindly donated his fee to cancer research.

to cancer research.

The next meeting is the Christmas social, which includes light festive refreshments on December 13. Keeping to a complete Christmas theme, the group welcomes Mary Bodfish for an illustrated presentation. illustrated presentation 'From Christmas Past to an illustrated

The meeting is in The Furnace Theatre at the Ruskin Glasshouse Centre, Amblecote at 7.30pm. Visitors are wel-come for the small charge of

Federation's carol concert

WEST Midlands Federation of Townswomen holds its carol service at St Thomas's Church, Market Street, Stourbridge, at

Church, Market Street, Stourbringe, at 2.15pm on Saturday. This will be attended by the Lady Mayor-ess of Dudley, Mrs Barbara Tyler. Invited guests will include National Trustee Jane Dayus Hinch and West Midlands Federation

President Christine Yorke. Organist James Lloyd Thomas will give a recital of seasonal music and Wollaston Guild choir will give a performance of carols with soloist Anne Tomlinson.

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Food campaign is right up his street

Coronation Street star Antony Cotton has joined the support for the Feed A Family campaign

CORONATION Street's Antony Cotton is among the latest names to back the Express & Star and Chronicles' Feed a Family This Christmas campairm

pagn.
The soap star, who has trod the cobbled streets of Weatherfield for a staggering 15 years as Sean Tully, was in Stourbridge to switch on the town's Christmas lights. Although, it didn't quite go to plan when the decorations came on a few seconds early.

But the busy star was happy to stick around for pictures with his fans and take a moment to support our appeal before being whisked away towards his next destination.

next destination.

The campaign is aiming to donate thousands of non-perishable items to food banks in Staffordshire and the Black Country, with more and more regular families having to turn to them just to get by. Last year, when we launched the drive, more than 9,000 items were generously donated by readers. Unsurprisingly celebrities

unnyside

Express & Star Wolverhampton, 51-53 Queen Street, WV1 1ES; Express & Star Cannock/Walsall office, Queen Square, Cannock WS11 1EA; Oldbury office, Black Country House, Rounds Green Road, Oldbury, B69 2DG.

DONATIONS CAN ALSO BE DROPPED OFF AT:

Waitrose Wolverhampton, Penn Road, WV2 4NJ; The Midcounties Co-operative Food Store Codsall, 28-32 Wood Lane/Bakers Way, Codsall WV8 1DB. Donations dropped off at those will go to The Well



have not hesitated to offer their backing for the scheme and this year has been no different

Slade guitarist Dave Hill, The Vamps, antiques guru Will Farmer and GB gold medallist Joe Clarke have all lent their faces to the cause in re-

While former Emmerdale actress Lisa Riley, featuring in this year's pantomime at the Wolverhampton Grand - Jack and the Be been joined by co-stars of the produc-

tion Ian Adams and Adam C Booth in

CHRISTMAS

showing support.

The items will be donated to The Well (Home of Wolverhampton Food Bank), Wolverhampton's the Good Shepherd Ministry, the Black Country Food Bank, the Smethwick Food Bank, Walsall North Food Bank and Cannock and District Food Bank while domestic violence support char ity The Haven will also benefit.

People have until December 16 to

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Centrepiece that people won't hold a candle to

THE Christmas tree is up, the festive houseplants are blooming, and all you need now is a centrepiece to give your dining table some wow factor.

Alex Cawley, plant area manager at Squire's Garden Centres, offers the following guide to help you make a gorgeous centrepiece using natural foliage and other garden materials...

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

To make the job easier, you can buy ready-made pine wreaths which will form the circular base for your candle centrepiece.

Alternatively, buy a wire frame and fill it with moss (which you can buy from a garden centre or lift from

your own lawn), wrapping flo-rists' wire around the frame to secure the moss, then add Christmas tree or other clippings (all facing in the same direction) to create the base for your decoration.

for your decoration.

Use a pair of needle nose pliers to help you secure small decorations to the wire frame.

USE REAL FOLIAGE

Take a walk around your garden to find berries, leaves and flowers to add to your natural wreath. Ideal specimens include pyracantha, which often has berries on it, holly, the white foliage of eucalyptus, conifers, wax leaf privet and the winter flowers of viburnum. If the weather has been mild, you can use tight clumps of

leaf privet and the winter flowers of viburnum. If the weather has been mild, you can use tight clumps of black berries from ivy. If you have to trim your Christmas tree, use offcuts from your Nordmann or Noble to create the frame or help fill in the gaps. Pine cones you may have gathered from a country walk can also be used, or you can buy them from garden centres.

ADD OTHEN NATURAL-LOOKING ADDITIONS

Other items you may want to use include dried orange circles - which you can make yourself by cutting the orange into slices then placing them on a tray in a barely warm oven for a few hours, until they are dried but not completely shrivelled. You can buy cinnamon sticks, lotus flower heads, artificial berries and ribbon in neutral colours if going for a more natural look, with a simple church candle for the centrepiece. This can be placed on a glass candle holder, which will be hidden by the foliage of the centrepiece.

ODD NUMBERS ARE BEST

ODD NUMBERS ARE BEST



Your centrepiece needs to be well balanced, so position the items at equal distances from each other and play around with them before dearound with them before deciding where to secure them.
Odd numbers always work better, so do combinations of threes or fives for the best effect. Avoid big bows on flat centrepieces as they take the emphasis away from the rest of the decoration, unlike a wreath on a front door, where a big bow placed on the top can be the focal point and brings the whole thing together.

PLAY WITH THE ORDER

PLAY WITH THE ORDER

Start with the largest items, such as pine cones. It you want some focal points, wire together a lotus flower, cinnamon sticks and an orange slice to create a single addition. Use a long piece of wire to secure the items, and then push the wire through and fold it around the frame, making sure you fold the wire back up into the frame so you don't scratch your table.

If you are using no patient flowers such as white visits of the property of the propert

If you are using natural flowers such as white viburnum, make sure the stalk is long enough to secure to the wreath easily. If you need to make the cutting smaller, snip off a little at a time, as you don't want to

smaller, single of a little at a tallie, as you don't want to cut off so much that it becomes unmanageable.

A novel idea is to use thin gold florists' wire all the way up to the flower, which not only gives it a little shine but makes the flower stem more bendable.

KEEP IT FRESH

KEEP IT FRESH

Mist the centrepiece regularly to keep the leaves looking their best throughout the festive season. If some of the flowers fade before Christmas, replace them with new ones just before the big day.

While some people use hairspray to keep indoor decorations in place and to help retain their shine, don't do that with a candle centrepiece, as hairspray can be very flammable.

Squire's Garden Centres are running Christmas masterclasses, where you can create a traditional

masterclasses, where you can create a traditional wreath for your front door, or a candle centrepiece for your dining table, tomorrow (Friday) at selected Squire's Garden Centres nationwide.

A 'missed opportunity' for homeowners



THE Chancellor's autumn budget was a missed opportunity to boost green energy and help householders, according

Although there were some encouraging proposals by Philip Hammond he did not announce any new support for renewable projects after 2020, said Ron Fox, of Noreus

"He talked about embracing the future in his speech," said Mr Fox. "But he seems to be blocking the new industries and supporting the fossil fuels of the past, ironically only days after the UK Government attended the UN cli-

mate conference in Bonn, Germany.

"With the recent figures showing that carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere at the highest for 800,000 years and with the problem of limiting warming of the earth to the agreed 1.5C above pre-industrial levels the Chancellor lost

achance to help reduce these levels.

"The Government should be telling us how they intend to develop these new energies, particularly as onshore wind and solar are cheaper than building new gas facilities. Also there are also huge cost reductions in electricity from waste, tidal, wave and geothermal technology."

But he said there were some encouraging environment.

But he said there were some encouraging environmental points in the Budget with a £400 million investment in electric vehicles, boosting the purchase of clean fuel cars with more roadside chargers, grant incentives to buy and Mr Fox said he also supported proposals to build 300,000 new homes a year – as long as they were not put on green

belt land. He also backed the budget statement that first-time buyers would pay no stamp duty on properties worth up to £300,000, higher diesel car road taxes of up to £500, a new £220 million Clean Air Fund for local authorities and consultation on a tax system on single-use plastic items to reduce waste

reduce waste.

This last proposal has the dual environmental benefit of reducing both usage and waste disposal as figures show 15 million bottles are put in landfill, thrown away or incinerated while almost none of the seven million takeaway coffee cups are recycled. But these moves were offset by a freezes to some air passenger and fuel duty, alongside tax breaks for the oil and gas industry.

Mr Fox said there were also missed opportunities with no

on announcement of a much-needed diesel scrappage scheme, nor measures to cut energy waste in new houses, which would reduce householders' energy bills, and no proposals to tackle the rising tide of plastic in the oceans.

He added: "I would also like to have a seen a commitment by Communication and the second communicat

ment by Government to invest in the UK's domestic waste infrastructure. At the moment UK waste management companies are paying to export waste out of our country which other countries utilise as fuel to power local homes

Park your troubles and look around green spaces

UNDERWOOD





IT is good to look up sometimes.
Lifting the gaze from the small patch of earth that happens to be in

front of us and looking at the garden as a whole can be very beneficial.

An equally valuable perspective can be gained by lifting one's gaze from the mundane realities of life and contemplating wilds riscue.

My wife and I recently took our two young children on a sponsored evening walk around the Quarry in Shrewsbury in aid of Hope House Children's Hospice.

It got me thinking about the importance of parks and open spaces which are shared between people.

The Quarry was established in 1719 and

now encompasses nearly 30 acres with the famous Dingle at its heart.

As well as the meandering Severn the

As wen as the meandering severn the park also boasts a 19th century bandstand and a play area for children.

The heyday of the municipal park was in the 19th century though the idea of a common shared space within or around an urban centre is perhaps as old as the city itself

itself.

The Victorians thought that creating urban parks was an antidote to discontent and poor public health caused by urban overcrowding and pollution.

Quality

They were often provided by municipal-

They were often provided by municipal-ities or wealthy philanthropists such as Joseph Strutt who created what may have been the first public park in Derby in 1840. Many were planted with the newest and best introductions of trees and shrubs so that the public could educate themselves about creation and cities and individuals could show off the quality of their connec-

Since their apogee the fortunes of our public green spaces have gone up and down. Many were given over to sports pitches because of perceived concerns over the fit-

ness of perceived concerns over the fitness of young people to fight.

During the Second World War many more were ploughed up as part of the Dig for Victory campaign.

In more recent years parks have come under a renewed threat from financial pressures and many are finding new ways of raising revenue. of raising revenue.

Some have begun to charge admission

which is ironic as many did originally when they were created.

Strutt's park in Derby was free for two days a week and charged for entry the rest

of the time.

This had the effect – whether intentional or otherwise – of reinforcing class divisions which were seen as essential to the opera-



The Dingle is the centrepiece of Shrewsbury's Quarry - one of the most well known and popular community parks in the county



Parkls are great places to see trees

tion of normal society at the time

tion of normal society at the time.

Many more are experimenting with quirky ideas or moving away from labour intensive formal planting and well maintained lawns in favour of wilder areas that require less upkeep.

This is not just because meadows are in

Vogue.

Each acre that does not have to be mown can save up to £1,000 a year.

One positive change over the years has been that our parks have become more



Striking colours can be found on leaves among the branches - just look up!

democratic, something that could disappear

if charging is introduced.

We are repeatedly told over and over again that Britain has become a more divided society. The more this is true the more necessary it is to have public spaces where people can interact.

Huge gaps exist between generations which is being continually reinforced by the housing crisis.

Having a free shared space where the generations can meet and exchange some

laughter and life experience are vital to a

healthy society.
What better place than a public park where a little bit of nature reminds us that where a little bit of nature reminds us that we are all fundamentally biological beings and in that sense on the same footing.

The Victorians might not have got everything right but in building public spaces they were on the right track.

I intend to spend more of my time and money supporting my local park and if you can I hope that you will also.

The vandalism has come as a major The Vandausin has come as a major blow to campaigners who are cur-rently raising money to restore the site to its former glory, under the new name Black Country Hippodrome. They warn that the vandals could put the project behind schedule.

Paul Collins, chairman of Black Country Hippodrome Limited, which took on a five-year lease of the building a year ago, said: "We are working to bring this theatre back for the whole community."

whole community."

But the group revealed they had been working to tackle vandalism since they took on the lease from Dudley Council and have decided to hire security guards to patrol the empty building. Mr Collins explained: "It seemed that they had broken in through the fire segapes and smashed through the fire escapes and smashed the suspended ceilings."

The company was given a lease of the building, which the previous council administration was considering buildozing, last December with the aims of having the Hippodrome back open by 2021. Campaigners hope to extend the lease but it was recently warrended that Dudley Calleon was he revealed that Dudley College may be interested in the site for a new-build project if the theatre venture fails.

Woman was trapped in car after accident

A WOMAN was taken to hospital after being trapped in a car following a crash near Kinver.

The incident happened on Dunsley Road, between Kinver and Stourton, just before 7.30pm on Saturday. Fire crews from Dudley and Wombourne attended and the woman was taken by ambulance to Russells Hall Hospital.

Dog fouling fines could be 17 doubled across the borough

Man dies after Netherton house fire



An investigation is under way after a man died after a house fire that happened in Netherton on Friday

A MAN died atter a biaze rorke out at a terraced house in Netherton, which investigators believe may have been started by a lithium battery on charge. The victim was dragged out of the property in Blackbrook Road on Fri-day by firefighters who tried to resus-citate him at the scene

A MAN died after a blaze broke out at a terraced house in Netherton, which investigators believe may have been is started by a lithium battery on charge. was cordoned off.

property in Blackbrook Road on Friday by firefighters who tried to resuscitate him at the scene.

But the victim, thought to be aged in

man from the downstairs. The same firefighters tried to resuscitate him and unfortunately their efforts were

in vain."
West Midlands Ambulance Service's Claire Brown said: "The fire service found one patient inside the property who was in cardiac arrest. Sadly, noth." ing could be done to save the patient.'

DOG owners who fail to clean up after their pets in Dudley borough could be fined up to £100, which is double the current maximum financial penalty.

Council bosses hope tougher penalties in a proposed Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) will act as a 'deterrent'.

The new order would also stop dogs being allowed in children's play areas, with similar punishment for owners caught flouting the regulations.

The maximum fine is currently £50.

Councillor Karen Shakespeare, cabinet member for environmental services, said: "We know from the amount of complaints we get that dog fouling remains an emotive issue for a lot of residents in the borough, many of them dog owners

"In the past three years, from April 2014 to April this year, Dudley Council received nearly 1,500 complaints about dog fouling.

"The local authority has a duty to ensure that our public spaces are cleaner, greener and safe for all to enjoy. We hope that introducing trushes republic for improved by degree to the proposed of the property of the proposed of the pro tougher penalties for irresponsible dog owners caught not cleaning up after their pets will act as a deterrent."

Survey

An online survey has already launched with residents given the chance to have their say.

The consultation will ask four ques-

tions. These include whether residents support officers insisting dog owners pick up after their animals on open pick up after their animals on open land with public access, and whether they support fixed penalty notices of up to £100. It also asks people if they are in favour of insisting dogs are kept out of children's play areas, and

kept out of children's piay areas, and whether they support penalties of up to £100 for owners who fail to remove dogs from a play area when asked.

The PSPO, if introduced, would replace all existing dog control legislation in the borough. It lasts for a maximum period of three years, after which it can be renewed

a home city concert date

ACCLAIMED Wolverhampton sing-er-songwriter Dan Whitehouse will be back for a homecoming concert at Newhampton Arts Centre on Sunday, December 17.

Dan, who released his fourth album That's Where I Belong last year, will be performing with a band and is being supported by The Little Unsaid and Matt Sayers.

The seated concert starts at 7.30pm and tickets cost £10.

and tickets cost £10.

The 38-year-old musician will be returning to the Newhampton in January as part of the city's Literary Festival to give a songwriting workshop.

See www.newhamptonarts.co.uk

orwww dan-whitehouse com websites



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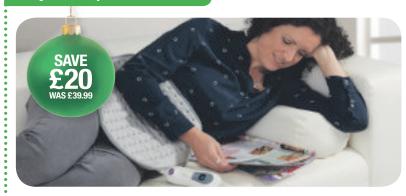
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NEWLY REFURBISHED It'S Challenging t ay Cruella de Vil

here's Cinderella and Jack and the Beanstalk. And there's Peter Pan and Snow White. But those looking for something different for the festive season can head to Birmingham's REP, which is producing a unique version of The 101 Dalmatians.

Dalmatians Pongo and Missis enjoy an idyllic life with their humans, Mr and Mrs Dearly. Then one day, the house is filled with the patter of tiny paws when Missis gives birth to a litter of adorable puppies. But just as the Dearlys get used to their new housemates, the puppies mystériously vanish.

With the help of the canine community and an Old English Sheepdog, Pongo and Missis set out on an adventure to find the missing puppies. Their quest leads them to the vicious Cruella de Vil. She hates dogs but loves fur coats and has set her sights on a certain black and white spotty pattern. Will the animals be able to get nome safely in time for Christmas?

The new adaptation of Dodie Smith's delightful 1956 novel is the perfect festive treat and has been brilliantly transformed for the stage by Debbie Isitt, the writer and director of the hugely popular Nativity! films.

Tessa Walker has returned to direct the family favourite following her record-breaking 2015 production, The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe.
Gloria Onitiri, who plays Cruella, says audiences are in

for a treat. The show opened at the end of November and will run until January 13.

"It's great. It's a real story, it's not just a fantasy panto, and it's based on a real piece of literature with lots of depth. People can expect a bit of a spectacle with plenty of morality and right and wrong. It's great."

EXCITING

Though the production is avowedly not a panto a few Christmas rules hold dear – first among them, that such shows only work when there's a great cast.

Gloria says: "Yes, we've got a ridiculously talented group of people on stage. It's a multi-faceted and diverse cast with puppeteers, musicians who play multiple instruments as well as great singers, dancers and actors. It's exciting. Without having to use lots of pyrotechnics we don't have to 'Baz Luhrmann' it - we've created a genuine spectacle."

The dogs aren't real. Of course. Though Hollywood movie makers might be able to train 101 Dalmatians, the REP's production features an assortment of puppets. Gloria laughs. "I think when I got cast if I'd have

been told it was real dogs, I'd have said no. But the puppeteering works really well."

The actress, who has previously featured on TV's Doctors, Spamalot, Grass, Porgy and Bess and Bad Girls, enjoys playing the show's villain.

"Everybody knows the Disney version, but the great thing about Cruella is that she's human. She's had a whole life. So I've had to work out where she's come from and why she feels the way she does and why she is so

mean and awful. What's she hiding underneath it all? "For me, any character you play, you need to do that with. You need a 3D character. I like people who are challenging. Everyone else would say she's mad and she's mean - I would say she's challenging."

Gloria has enjoyed a fascinating career in which she's featured in everything from Jack and the Beanstalk to Taming of The Shrew and The Tempest. There have been plenty of classics – but she's mixed those with productions like The Lion King at The Lyceum. "I don't think it's just because of the dice. I think the

diversity has been because I sing as well. I just love a good story, whatever is there in front of me, I'll do it. I also think that by keeping myself as broad as I possibly can, my skills grow. It's about longevity and keeping my

"I'm obsessed with language. I studied English at





university and I'm obsessed with the root of things and how stories have changed, not just from English

culture, but from all cultures. I've enjoyed Shakespeare – Shakespeare is the mothership. I featured at The Globe in Taming of the Shrew, which was phenomenal. There's a tradition that you have to wake up the stage before you start a show and we did a bit of drumming and all sorts and stood in the famous King's spot. It was the first time my cast had been on the stage and I burst into tears because it was so powerful and emotional. It just happened. I did not will it. It is an emotional space. There are parts of the stage you can do a speech and feel

Gloria is glad to be back home for 101 Dalmatians. She studied at University in Birmingham, leaving in 2006 and being too busy to return. "It's like visiting an old relative. I've felt wonderful being back here. The REP building is just astonishing and everyone is really kind.

The REP is getting into the charitable spirit during the



show by creating a joint fundraising partnership with Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. The city centre theatre will be raising funds during the run of their production of The Hundred and One Dalmatians.

There are various fundraising activities planned during the run of the show, which will help to jointly fundraise towards Birmingham Repertory Theatre's million pound campaign REP First and the work of Hearing Dogs for Deaf People.

Twenty pence of every pound raised will go towards the work of Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, with the remainder going towards REP First initiatives, such as providing interpreters for the REP's youth theatre in order for Deaf children and young people to take part, as well as allowing the theatre to stage more accessible productions for people with a variety of additional support needs.

Tickets are available from the box office ● For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.



It's time for a great big Grand

GRAND pantomime Jack And The Beanstalk opens on Saturday to delight family audiences in the Midlands throughout the festive season and beyond.

The show features returning favourites from last year's award-winning production of Aladdin – Lisa Riley, Doreen Tipton, lan Adams and Adam C Booth – and joining them will be West End

and Pop Idol star Gareth Gates as Jack.

Also on stage will be The Bill star Graham Cole as the evil Fleshcreep, musical theatre actress Sarah Vaughan as the Princess and Julie Paton will play The Harp. Also watch out for Daisy the Cow and a very hungry giant.
Lisa Riley captured the hearts of Wolverhampton as the Slave

of the Ring in last year's pantomime and is back to play Mother Nature. Lisa is a régular panellist on ITV's Loose Women, wowed viewers with her twinkle-toes in Strictly Come Dancing and first found fame playing Mandy Dingle in the ITV soap Emmerdale.
Black Country internet sensation Doreen Tipton, as played by

Walsall actress Gill Jordan, has graciously accepted the workload in appearing alongside Lisa as the Trot family's lazy next door neighbour. Doreen's original million hit YouTube viral success has blossomed into a series of theatre tours, a film featuring Robert Plant and Steve Bull, an autobiography - which somebody else

had to write because she couldn't be bothered - and her own online comedy sketch channel called Doreen TV.

Ian Adams returns to the role of dame, Adam C Booth who received great critical acclaim as Wishee Washee last year will play Jack's brother Simple Simon and Graham Cole, best-known as PC Tony Stamp in The Bill, will be going from good cop to

Irish actress Sarah Vaughan, who stars alongside them as the Princess, has appeared in panto for producers Qdos Entertainment numerous times, most recently as Cinderella in High Wycombe alongside Louie Spence and Linda Robson last

Bradford-raised Gareth Gates was the runner-up to Will Young in the first series of Pop Idol and went on to find success in theatreland in such shows at Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Les Miserables, Legally Blonde and Footloose

This year's panto will again be produced by Qdos Entertainment, the world's biggest pantomime producer and the same team behind the annual Grand panto for the last two decades. It is being directed by David Janson with choreography by Julie Paton.
The spectacular show will continue at the Grand until January

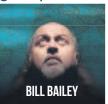
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coming



Rock & roll with music legend Roy

s party time with the I V It Could Be Christmas Everyday man... Roy Wood, pictured, brings nis Rock & Roll Band o the Robin 2 in Bilston on Tuesdav Nizzard hitmaker will be lackberry Way to See My aby Jive, at this concert. Also at the Mount Pleasant venue tomorrow (Friday) will be a Northern Soul and Motown night featuring

Angelo Starr, brother of late soul legend Edwin and Lorraine Silver with the Edwin Starr Band.

Sacred and pop in festive concerts at Birmingham venues

Tomorrow evening (Friday) the City of Birmingham Choir present their annual performance of Handel's masterpiece Messiah at Symphony Hall, Birmingham. It's Christmas with The Overtones at the same venue on Saturday night when the vocal group perform festive favourites, including White Christmas, Santa Claus Is Coming To Town and Let It Snow. Having firmly established themselves as the number one vocal harmony group in the UK, The Overtones – who were signed by a talent scout while working as decorators in a shop near Oxford Street – have sold over a million records and had five top five albums.

The Salvation Army are in concert twice at Symphony Hall on Sunday, at 2.30 and 6pm, and the That'll Be The Day Christmas Show will be rocking around the Christmas tree at Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday evening. The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, bring lunchtime Christmas music to Symphony Hall on Monday at 1pm, and in the evening the venue hosts the festive choral sounds of Harry Christophers and The Sixteen with Glory To The Christ Child See thsh.co.uk or call 0121 780 3333.

SATURDAY'S TV DECEMBER 9



John Noakes: TV Hero (BBC2, 5.30pm)

Documentary paying tribute to the life and career of John Noakes, the Blue Peter presenter and TV daredevil who died in May this year. Hearing from many of his colleagues and co-workers both in front of and behind the cameras – along with friends and family, the programme sheds light on Noakes reputation as a 'man of action', cemented by stunts including climbing Nelson's Column without a harness, achieving a world-record breaking five mile free-fall, and risking life and limb on the Cresta Run. The film also illustrates how John hid his true personality behind his enthusiastic Blue Peter persona, considering himself to be an 'ordinary bloke' at heart.

BBC₁

6.00 Breakfast. 10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live. 11.30 Nigella: At My Table. (R) 12.00 Frootball Focus. 1.00 BBC News; Weather. 1.15 Live Snooker: UK Championship. Coverage of the opening semi-linal. 4.30 Final Score. 5.10 Len Goodman's Partners in Rhyme. 5.40 BBC News. 5.50 Regional Programme.

- BBC News. 5.50 Hegional Programme. 6.00 Pointless Celebrities. Jilly Goolden, Olly Smith, Sophie Grigson Michael Caines. Fay Maschler, Brian Turner, Cyrus Todiwala and Tony Singh compete in a "food and drink" edition of the unorthodox quiz. (R)
- 6.45 Strictly Come Dancing. The five remaining celebrities and their seasoned dancing partners reach the semi-final, and take to the the semi-final, and take to the stage in the studio to once again demonstrate their dancing skills. All the contestants face a two dances apiece as they try to win the favour of judges Shirley Ballas, Bruno Tonioli, Darcey Bussell and Craig Revel Horwood – and the viewers at home – if they are to be in with a chance of winning. Once the show is over, voting lines are opened, and fans are given a chance to have their say over who chance to have their say over who should make it to the final.
- 8.20 Michael McIntyre's Big Show. The comedian's Saturday night entertainment showcase continues, as celebrity couple and continues, as celebrity couple and Ty presenting duo Marvin and Rochelle Humes both hand over their phones for the show's first-ever double Send-to-All. Pop-rock outfit The Vamps perform on-stage, and Michael showcases some of his new material. Plus, an extra in an in-production advert suddenly finds himself under the contients of the Unexpected Str. spotlight as the Unexpected Star of the Show.
- 9.20 Casualty. Elle's unruly teenage son Blake gets involved in an off-licence robbery, and Max continues to make a bad impression on would-be sweetheart Polly.
- 10.10 BBC News; Weather.; National Lottery Update.
- 10.30 Match of the Day. Highlights from the Premier League, including West Ham United v Chelsea at the London Stadium and Newcastle United v Leicester City
- 11.55 The NFL Show.

12.25 Film: Someone to Watch Over Me. (1987) 2.05 Weather for the Week Ahead. 2.10 BBC News.

BBC2

6.15 Hollday of My Lifetime with Len Goodman. (R) 7.00 Nature's Weirdest Events. (R) 7.30 Naom's Nightmares of Nature. 8.00 Deadly 60. (R) 8.30 Show Me What You're Made Of: UK. 9.00 Saturday Mash-Upi 11.00 Penguins on a Plane: Great Animal Moves. (R) 12.00 Raymond Blanc: How to Cook Well. (R) 12.30 Tom Kerridge's Best Ever Dishes. (R) 1.00 Excape to the Continent. (R) 4.00 Mastermind. (R) 4.30 Live Smooker: UK Championship. Further coverage of the opening semi-final. 5.30 John Noakes: TV Hero.

- 6.10 BP Confidential. Documentary BP Confidential. Documentary charting Blue Peter's development from a typical children's magazies show into a national institution, and an important lynchpin in the BBC One schedule. Originally broadcast in 1998, as part of the shows 40th anniversary celebrations, the programme also reveals how taking the helm on Blue Peter often led to presenters and producers facing unexpected. and producers facing unexpected personal and professional pressures. (R)
- 7.00 Live Snooker: UK Championship.
 Coverage of the second semi-final
 on the 11th day at the Barbican
 Centre in York, as the prestigious
 ranking tournament continues. At ranking tournament continues. At this stage of last year's event, world number one Mark Selby dominated fellow Englishman Shaun Murphy, winning 6-2 to progress to a final against Ronnie O'Sullivan. Presented by Hazel Irvine, with a commentary team that includes Steve Davis, Ken Doherty, Stephen Hendry, John Parrott, Dennis Taylor and Peter Ebdon. Subsequent programmes subject to change.
- 10.00 QI XL. Sara Pascoe, Colin Lane and Jimmy Carr join regular panellist Alan Davies and host Sandi Toksvig for an extended edition of the quiz show.
- edition of the quiz snow.

 10.45 Insert Name Here. Comedy panel game in which host Sue Perkins asks teams captained by Richard Osman and Josh Widdicombe to answer questions about famous neonle who share a name (R)
- 11.15 Film: The Cider House Rules. (1999) Drama, starring Tobey Maguire and Michael Caine. .10 Film: Borrowed Time. (2012) 2.40 nis Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty, 6.10 Bottom Knocker Street. (R) 6.20 Bottom Knocker Street. (R) 6.35 Dino Dam: Trek's Adventures. (R) 6.45 Super 4. (R) 7.00 Mission Employable. (R) 7.05 Oddbods. (R) 7.10 Ultimate Spider-Man: Web Warriors. 7.30 Scrambled!: Scrambled! 7.35 Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) 7.50 Scrambled!: The Spotser Show. (R) 7.50 Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) 8.30 Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. 8.10 Scrambled: The Powerpuff Girls.
(R) 8.30 Scrambled: Thunderbirds Are
(S) 9.00 Scrambled! Thunderbirds Are
(S) 9.00 Scrambled! Wishfart (R) 9.25
ITV News. 9.30 Saturday Morning with
James Martin. 11.25 Gino Istalian
Coastal Escape. (R) 11.50 The Hungry
Sailors. (R) 12.50 Thunderbirds Are Go.
(R) 1.15 ITV News; Weatther. 1.25 The X
Factor: Final. (R) 3.00 Endeavour. (R)
5.00 The Obses. (R)
6.00 Paul O'Grady: For the Love of
Dogs. The comedian follows the
work of Battersea Dogs & Cats
Home in London, meeting staff
involved in treating, training and
rehoming animals. (R)
6.25 Regional Programme; Weather.
6.35 ITV News; Weather.

- 6.35 ITV News: Weather.
- 6.35 ITV News; Weather.
 6.50 You've Been Framed! Harry Hill narrates a comical selection of mishaps filmed by viewers, featuring everything from cute kids and crazy animals to pranks and painful-looking accidents.
 7.15 Ninja Warrior UK. Ben Shephard, Rochelle Humes and Chris Kamara host the second semi-final, challenging more returning contestants to face the infamous obstacle course once again. (R)
 8.20 L'ma Celebrity Ref Ne Out of
- obstacle course once again. (R)

 8.90 I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here! Ant and Dec present the celebrity survival challenge, as the tamous faces' ordeal in the Australian jungle draws close to its conclusion. The pair offer viewers one last chance to catch up with the surviving contestants, all of whom will have their bearts et and whom will have their hearts set on being named King or Queen of the Jungle.
- Junge.

 9.50 Through the Keyhole: I'm a
 Celebrity Get Me Out of Here!
 New series. The home-invading
 panel show returns with an "I'm A
 Celebrity..." special. With
 panellists Jimmy Carr, Stacey
 Solomon, Myleene Klass and Tony
 Blackburn Blackburn
- 10.50 ITV News; Weather
- 11.05 Film: Shaun of the Dead. (2004) Comedy horror, with Simon Pegg. 12.50 Jackpot247. 3.00 The Hungry Sailors. (R) 3.50 ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.95 Trail Running: Skyrunner World Series. 6.35 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 7.00 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 7.25 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 7.25 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 7.25 Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 7.50 Frasier. (R) 8.15 Frasier. (R) 8.45 The Big Bang Theory. (R) 9.40 The Simpsons. (R) 10.10 The Simpsons. (R) 10.40 The Simpsons. (R) 11.10 Film: 12 Dates of Christmas. (2011) Romantic fantasy, with Amy Smart and Mark-Paul Me. (R) 1.25 Come Dine with Me. (R) 1.25 Come Dine with Me. (R) 1.25 Come Dine with Me. (R) 3.30 A Place in the Sun: Home or Away. (R) 4.30 Best Laid Plans. 5.30 Grand Designs. (R) 6.30 Channel 4 News. 7.00 Guy Martins WWI Tank. The

7.00 Guy Martin's WWI Tank. The presenter builds a working replica of a First World War tank to mark the centenary of the Battle of Cambrai, and takes his tank

- Cambrai, and takes his tank
 driving test so he can take his
 creation on to the streets for
 Lincoln's Remembrance Day
 parade. He also delves into the
 history of the earliest armoured
 vehicles, the soldiers who crewed
 them, and the women who built
 them. (R)
 Film: X-Men: Days of Future
 Past. (2014) In a future ravaged
 by war, the superhero team makes
 a desperate last stand against a
 force of deadly robots. Their only
 hope is to send Wolverine back in
 time to the 1970s, to join forces
 with an earlier version of the
 X-Men and change the events that
 started the conflict. Superhero
 adventure sequel, starring Hugh adventure sequel, starring Hugh Jackman, Jennifer Lawrence James McAvoy and Michael Fassbender
- 11.35 Film: The Drop. (2014) A bartender who secretly work gangsters gets involved in a obbery gone wrong that digs up long-buried secrets. Crime drama, starring Tom Hardy.
- starring Tom Hardy.

 1.35 The Last Lep, Adam Hills , Josh
 Widdicombe and Alex Brooker are joined
 by another guest for a comic review of
 the significant moments of the past
 seven days. (R) 2.30 Hollyoaks.
 Omnibus. Prince and Sally help each
 other out, Cindy struggles to trust Dirk,
 and Sami is desperate to help James at
 work. 4.40 Location, Location, Location,
 Helping how first-time huvers in Helping two first-time buyers in Manchester. (R) **5.35** Kirstie's Handmade Christmas. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! 10.10 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) 10.45 The Gadget Show. (R) 11.40 Crusing With Jane McDonald. 11.50 Film: A Perfect Christmas List. (2014) 1.40 Film: A Nuttracaker Christmas. (2016) Premiere. Festive drama, starring Amy Acker. 3.20 Film: Nativity 3: Dude. Where's My Donkey?! (2014) Premiere. Comedy sequel, starring Martin Clunes. 4.20 5 News Update. 4.25 Film: Nativity 3: Dude, Where's My Donkey?! (2014) Concluded. 5.35 Film: The Family Man. (2000) Drama, starring Nicolae Sage. (2000) Drama, starring Nicolas Cage.

6 35 5 News Undate 6.40 Film: The Family Man. (2000)

7.55 5 News Weekend

- 8.00 Santa Makes You Laugh Out Loud. Comedians Zoe Lyons, Ellie Taylor and Marlon Davis present a seasonal clip show featuring some of the funniest Christmas-themed videos currently doing the rounds online. Among the disastrous 'Santa fails', Christmas dinner 'Santa fails', Christmas dinner disasters and grumpy dressed-up pets, the trio also highlight the stories behind popular yuletide videos, including the story of the bearded shopper who decided to play along when a three-year-old passer-by mistook him for Father Christmas, and Norman the bull mastiff, who hates Christmas and all associated sonns Marzated hy. all associated songs. Narrated by lain Lee (R)
- Football on 5: The Championship. Colin Murray introduces highlights from the weekend's games.
- from the weekend's games.

 Football on 5: Goal Rush. Colin
 Murray introduces all the goals
 from the weekend's games in
 Leagues One and Two, including
 Peterborough United v Blackburn
 Rovers
- Hovers.

 10.25 NCIS: New Orleans. The captain of a private yacht, along with a waiter, are murdered onboard the vessel, and the NCIS agents investigate when it emerges the boat belongs to a drug baron.

 11.20 NCIS: New Orleans. Pride goes request to take down drug baron.
- rogue to take down drug baron Garcia, and when his NCIS colleagues volunteer to help, he launches a undercover operation that could cost their careers and their lives.
- 12.15 SuperCasino. 3.10 Film: The Craigslist Killer. (2011) 4.40 Cruising With Jane McDonald. (R) 5.00 House Doctor. (R) 5.20 Wildlife SOS. (R)

DIGITAL

7.00 Ancient Egypt: Life and Death in the Valley of the Kings 8.00 Kolkata with Sue Perkins 9.00 Witnesses: A Frozen Death 10.55 The Vietnam War 11.45 What a Performancel Pioneers of Popular Entertainment 12.45 Peaky Blinders 3.40 Close

12.20 Take Me Out 1.35 Film:
Beethoven's Christmas Adventure (2011)
2.35 FYI Daily 2.40 Film: Beethoven's
Christmas Adventure (2011) 3.25 i'm a
Celebrity Get Me Out of Here! 4.55 Film:
Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang (2010)
6.00 FYI Daily 6.05 Film: Nanny McPhee
and the Big Bang (2010) 7.10 Film: The
Amazing Spider-Man (2012) 8.10 FYI
Daily 8.15 Film: The Amazing SpiderMan (2012) 9.50 Family Guy 11.50 i'm a
Celebrity: Extra Camp 11.50 Family Guy
12.20 American Dail 1.20 Release the
Hounds 2.15 Viral Tap 2.55 Teleshopping
5.55 ITV2 Nightscreen 12.20 Take Me Out 1.35 Film:

17V3

12.35 Film: Columbo: Death Hits the Jackpot (1991) 2.40 Sherlock Holmes: The Last Vampyre 4.55 Agatha Christie's Marple 9.00 Grantchester 11.00 Blue Murder 1.05 Wycliffe 2.00 TV3 Nightscreen 2.30 Teleshopping

1.15 ITV Racing: Live from Sandown, Ed 1.15 I'V Racing: Live from Sandown. Ed Chamberlin presents coverage of eight races. 4.00 Film: The Dam Busters (1954) 5.00 F'V Daily 5.05 Film: The Dam Busters (1954) 6.35 Film: Live and Let Die (1973) 7.35 FVI Daily 7.40 Film: Live and Let Die (1973) 9.00 Film: Octopussy (1983) 10.00 FVI Daily 10.05 Film: Octopussy (1983) 10.00 FVI Daily 10.05 Film: Octopussy (1983) 12.40 FVI Daily 12.45 Film: Renegades (1989) 12.40 FVI Daily 12.45 Film: Renegades (1989) 1.50 Monster Carp 2.50 ITV4 Nightscreen 3.00 Teleshopping

E4
11.00 The Big Bang Theory 12.00 Film:
Marmaduke (2010) 1.45 Rude(ish) Tube
Shorts 2.00 The Goldbergs 4.30 The Big
Bang Theory 9.00 Film: The Impossible
(2012) 11.10 Gogglebox 1.20 The
Inbetweeners 2.25 Rude Tube 3.20 First
Dates Hotel 4.15 How! Met Your Mother
4.55 Rules of Engagement

Film4
11.00 Miracle on 34th Street (1947) 1.00
Flight of the Navigator (1986) 2.45
Ramona and Beezus (2010) 4.50 The
Two Faces of January (2014) 6.40 About
Time (2013) 9.00 The Wolf of Wall Street
(2013) 12.30 Underworld: Rise of the
Lycans (2009) 2.15 Heart of a Dog
(2015) 3.55 Close

SHOULDER OF MUTTON 65 Birmingham Road, Rowley Regis B65 OHS **Voted Halesowen Chronicle** Pub of the Year 2017 вOX WYEVALLEY lection of Real Ales including CARD SCHE 10p back for every £1.00 spent Bathams, Burton Bridge, Enville, Ask inside for more details Holdens, Wye Valley Terms and conditions apply. Card for illustration purposes only.

Offering a warm welcome



Managers Paul and Carol always ensure a warm welcome to customers both old and new at Blackheath's Shoulder of Mutton pub.

For all the sports fans they boast three large TV screens featuring all sports on Sky, BT and all BOX OFFICE Events not to mention AT THE RACES.

For those who like 'doing' rather than watching', there is the availability of the pool table and dart board.

Lovalty

The pub itself boasts a wide range of ciders, lagers, wines and spirits including four 'Real Ales' which they rotate weekly. Regulars very often enjoy ales such as Bathams, AJ Ales, Oakham, JHB, Stairway To Heaven and MA Pardoes Entire, plus many more!

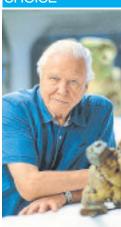
The pub also run a loyalty scheme which means customers can get 10p back on their card for every pound they spend.

A pub spokesman added: "With a luke box and free WIFI to compliment the regular entertainment every Friday, customers cannot ask for much more from a local pub!'



If an ad is wrong, the ASA is here to put it right.





David Attenborough

Attenborough and the Giant Elephant (BBC1, 9pm)

The naturalist investigates the life of Jumbo, a famous Victorian elephant, supposedly the largest that ever lived. Jumbo arrived in London Zoo in 1865 and was popular with the roval family, but was dangerously unhappy in captivity. In later life, Jumbo would be sold to PT Barnum's circus, becoming a celebrity before dying under mysterious circumstances. Attenborough examines Jumbo's remains and considers the lives of elephants in the wild to learn more about the animal's difficult life.

(R) 9.00 The Andrew Marr Show. 10.00 Fem Britton Meets Barbara Dickson. 11.00 Reprosense Fritton Meets Barbara Dickson. 11.00 Regional Programme. 12.15 Bargain Hunt. (R) 1.00 BBC News; Weather. 1.15 Escape to the Country. (R) 1.50 Mary Berry's Country House Secrets. (R) 2.50 Lifeline. 3.00 Songs of Praise. 3.35 Film: Toy Story. (1995) Pixar animated adventure. 4.50 Blue Planet II. (R) 5.50 BBC News. 6.05 Regional Programme.

SUNDAY'S TV DECEMBER 10

- Planet II. (R) 5.50 BBC News.
 6.05 Regional Programme.
 6.15 Countryfile. Ellie Harrison and
 Matt Baker present the show from
 the Norfolk-Suffolk border,
 discovering a conservation effort
 to save two species of animal
 found in the area that are on the
 brink of extinction. Ellie also meets
 a mother and daughter trying to
 make Ipswich safe for hedgehogs
 and Matt meets a farmer who has
 found a way to grow yeoetables all found a way to grow vegetables all year round. Plus, a shepherd-turned-artists, alpacas with an unusual job and a report on animal
- Strictly Come Dancing: The Results. Claudia Winkleman and Tess Daly reveal the results of last night's viewers' vote, which will decide who is going through to next week's final.
- 8.00 Blue Planet II. The impact of humans on aquatic wildlife, from albatrosses unwittingly feeding their offspring plastic to communications between animals disrupted by noise. Last in the
- 9.00 Attenborough and the Giant Attenborougn and the Glant Elephant. The naturalist investigates the life of a Victorian elephant, supposedly the largest that ever lived, that became famous at London zoo and as part of PT Barnum's circus.

10.00 BBC News.

10.00 BBC News.

10.20 Regional Programme.

10.30 Match of the Day 2. Mark
Chapman reviews the latest
Premier League action, featuring
Manchester United v Manchester
City, Liverpool v Everton and
Southampton v Arsenal.

11.35 The Women's Football Show. A look at the biggest issues in the women's game, focusing on matters at both club and

12.10 Ronny Chieng: International Student. 12.40 Weather for the Week Ahead. 12.45 BBC News.

6.05 Coast. (R) 7.05 Gardeners' World. (R) 7.35 The Secret History of the British Garden. (R) 8.35 Countryfile. (R) 9.30 Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. 11.00 Food & Drink. (R) 11.30 My Life on a Plate. (R) 12.15 MOTD2 Extra. 1.00 Live Snooker: UK Championship, Coverage of the opening session of the final from the Barbican Centre in York, as the

Barbican Cente in York, as the tournament widely regarded as the second-most prestigious on the calendar continues. Subsequent programmes subject to change. 5.15 ki Sunday.

6.15 Flog III Antiques experts James Lewis and Caroline Hawley visit Wolverhampton Art Gallery where they assess aboriginal arl and a 1920s tennis racket. Paul Martin presents. (R)

7.00 Live Snooker: UK Championship. Coverage of the second session of

LIVE SHOURER: UK CHAMIPUNISHING.
COverage of the second session of
the final from the Barbican Centre
in York, where the first player to
reach 10 frames will be crowned
champion. Mark Selby held his
nerve to win the trophy here last
year for the second time, holding
off a cemphage by Bangie off a comeback by Ronnie O'Sullivan to prevail 10-7. At 7-2 O'Sullivan to prevail 10-7. At 7-2 ahead the Jester from Leicester seemed set for a comfortable evening, but the Rocket closed the deficit to 8-7, before Selby clinched victory in style with two centuries to cement his place at the top of the world rankings. Presented by Hazel Irvine, with a commentary team that includes Steve Davis, Ken Doherty, Stephen Hendry, John Parrott, Dennis Taylor and Peter Ebdon. Brunlovable Me. Documentary

laylor and Peter Eddon.

11.00 Employable Me. Documentary following some of Britain's most extraordinary job seekers as they prove that having Tourette's syndrome or autism should not make them unemployable. (R)

12.00 Athletics: European Cross Country

12.00 Athletics: European Cross Country Highlights. Action from the annual championships, featuring the men's and women's races in Samorin, Slowakia.

1.05 Film. 20 Nesbo's Headhunters. (2011) A corporate headhunter moonlights as a thief, but his latest robbery leads him to uncover a dangerous secret. Crime thriller, starring Aksel Hennie and Nikolaj Coster-Waldau.

2.40 Sign Zone: Question Time. Topical debate from Swansea, chaired by David Dimbleby. With panelists including Welsh Dimbleby, with panelists including Welsh Labour Party leader Carwyn Jones and TV and radio host Richard Bacon. (R) 3.40 Holby City. A new arrival in Holby sets the wheels of change in motion. (R) 4.40 This Is BBC Two.

6.00 CITV: Sooty, 6.10 Bottom Knocker Street. (R) 6.20 Bottom Knocker Street. (R) 6.35 Dino Dan, Trek's Adventures. (R) 6.45 Super 4. (R) 7.00 Mission Employable. (R) 7.05 Oddbods. (R) 7.10 Thunderbins Are Go. (R) 7.30 Scrambled!: Scrambled! 7.35 Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) 7.50 Scrambled!: Ben 10.8.10 Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) 8.30 Film: Scrambled!: Scooby-Dool Haunted Holidys. (2012) 9.00 Scrambled!: Wishfart. (R) 9.25 TIV News. 9.30 Best Walks with a View with 9.00 Scrambled! Wishfart. (R) 9.25 ITV News, 9.30 Best Walks with a View with Julia Bradbury. (R) 9.55 The Martin Julia Bradbury. (R) 9.55 The Martin Lewis Money Show. (R) 10.25 Save Money: Good Food. (R) 11.00 Tipping Point. (R) 12.00 Film: Junior. (1994) Cornedy, Starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. 2.05 ITV News; Weather. 2.15 You've Been Framed! Gold. (R) 2.45 Midsomer Murders. (R) 4.40 The Chase. (R) 5.35 How to Spend it Well at Christmas with Phillip Schoffield. (R)

Schofield. (R)
6.35 Regional Programme; Weather
6.45 ITV News; Weather.

7.00 Ninja Warrior UK. Competitors from across the UK test their strength, speed and courage in this obstacle-course challenge. (R)

8.00 The Chase Celebrity Special.
Sam Quek, Basil Brush, Andi
Peters and Charlie Higson answer
general knowledge questions and
work as a team to secure a cash prize for charity. Presented by Bradley Walsh.

9racley Waters

9racley The Celebrity Get Me Out of
Here! Ant and Dec present the
final of the 17th series, as the
remaining famous faces take on
one last round of gruelling
challenges in the Australian jungle.
Votes from the audience will decide who is this year's most popular contestant. Once the popular contestant. Unce the results are in and the viewer's choice has been revealed, they will be crowned as this year's King or Queen of the Jungle, before they and their fellow finalists make their escape from the jungle and begin their long-awated journey back to the comforts of home. Last in the series.

10.35 ITV News; Weather. 10.50 Diamond Geezers and Gold Dealers. (R)

11.50 The Detectives: Inside the Major Crimes Team. (R) 12.40 Jackpot247. 3.00 Motorsport UK. 3.50 ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.20 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) 6.45
3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) 7.10
Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 7.35
Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 8.30
Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 8.30
Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) 8.30
Frasier. (R) 9.00 Frasier. (R) 9.30
Sunday Brunch. 12.30 Paul Hollywood:
A Baker's Life. (R) 1.00 Film: Evolution. (2001) Sci-fi comedy, starring David Duchovny. 3.00 Film: The Sorcerer's Apprentice. (2010) Fantasy adventure, starring Nicolas Cage. 5.10 The
Snowman. (R) 5.45 The Snowman and the Snowdog. (R)

the Snowdog. (R)
6.10 Channel 4 News.

6.30 Britain's Wildest Weather 2017.
Some of the UK's most unusual weather in the past year, including catastrophic flooding, tornadoes, lightning strikes and record-breaking storms. Featuring first-hand accounts and footage, and a look at the scientific explanations for these unusual conditions

 To ritese unusual conditions.
 To describe the Malters. The actress travels on the famous Great Western Railway to Cornwall. She recalls childhood holidays when she stops at Torquay before heading to a supposedly haunted castle at Kinsswear. She also uncovers. Kingswear. She also uncovers tales of smuggling and joins members of the RNLI on a practice run before visiting an unusual cake shop in Penzance.

shop in Penzance.
Film: The Second Best Exotic
Marigold Hotel. (2015) Premiere.
With the original Best Exotic
Marigold Hotel a roaring success,
owner Sonny decides the time is
right to expand his business
empire. But to do so, he and
the rest of the residents must pull
out all the stops to impress a
retential investor's insentation. potential investor's inspector - a task that proves to be easier said than done. Comedy drama sequel, with Dev Patel, Maggie Smith, Judi Dench and Richard

11.30 Film: Unbroken. (2014) Ar Olympic athlete serving in the Second World War survives being lost at sea and held in a brutal PoW camp. Fact-based drama, with Jack O'Connell and Domhnall Gleeson.

Gleeson. 1.55 Film: Departure. (2015) Premiere. Drama, starring Juliet Stevenson. 3.45 Gillette World Sport. 4.15 KOTV Boxing Weekly. 4.40 Grand Designs Australia. A couple build a large house on an Adelaide hillside. (R) 5.35 Countdown. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshakel: Little Princess. 6.10 Wanda and the Alien. (R) 6.20 Poppy Cat. (R) 6.35 Wissper. (R) 6.40 Milkshakel Monkey. (R) 6.45 Milkshakel Bopping About. (R) 6.50 Simon. (R) 7.00 Peppa Pig. (R) 7.05 Paw Patrol. (R) 7.15 Mofly, 7.20 Milkshakel Bop Box. (R) 7.25 Kilysper. Som. (R) 7.25 Ukr. 5 Col. (R) 7.25 Kilysper. Som. (R) 7.25 Ukr. 5 Col. (R) 7.25 Kilysper. Som. (R) 7.25 Kilysper. Som. (R) 7.25 Ukr. 5 Kilysper. Som. (R) 7.25 K 7.00 Peppa Pig. (R) 7.05 Paw Patról. (R) 7.15 Moly, 7.20 Milkshake Bop Box. (R) 7.25 Fireman Sam. (R) 7.35 Olly the Little White Van. (R) 7.35 Olly the Little White Van. (R) 7.50 Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) 8.15 Paw Patrol. (R) 8.30 Nella the Princess Knight. (R) 8.50 Nodby. Toyland Detective. (R) 9.00 Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) 9.10 Shimmer and Shine. (R) 9.30 Digby Dragon. (R) 9.45 Peppa Pig. (R) 9.55 Peppa Pig. (R) 10.05 Football on 5: The Championship. (R) 11.00 Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) 11.30 Firm: The Secret Life of Mrs Claus. (2015) 1.10 Film: Journey Back to Christmas. (2016) Premiere. Festive fantasy, starring Candace Cameron Bure. 2.55 Trolls Holiday Special 3.25 5 News Weekend. 3.05 Film: Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End. (2007) Fantasy adventure sequel, starring Johnny Depp. 4.30 5 News Update. 4.35 Film: Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End. (2007)

Concluded.

6.45 Film: Need for Speed. (2014) A street racer is betrayed by a friend, and ends up being framed for causing a death during an illegal contest. Two years later, he is released from prison and returns to the underground racing circuit with revenge in mind. Action adventure based on the video game, starring Aaron Paul, Dominic Cooper, Imogen Poots and Michael Keaton. Edited for language and pudity.

and Michael Keaton. Edited for language and nudity. Film: Chappie. (2015) Premiere. Two small-time crooks kidnap the inventor of a highly intelligent law-enforcement robot. They force him to reprogram the android so it will help them carry out an audacious heist worth \$200million, but in dions on, incur the wrath of a doing so, incur the wrath of a ruthless and corrupt general. Sci-fi thriller, starring Sharlto Copley, Hugh Jackman and Dev Patel.

10.005 News Update.

10.005 News Update.
10.05 Film: Chappie. (2015) Concluded.
11.20 Film: Resident Evil: Afterlife.
(2010) Zombie-fighting heroine
Alice's search for human survivors
leads her into a deadly trap. Action
horror sequel, starring Milla
Jovovich, Ali Larter and
Wentworth Miller.

1.05 Super-Sepio. 3.10 Span Star Killer.

1.05 SuperCasino. 3.10 Soap Star Killer: Countdown to Murder. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Only Connect 7.30 University
Challenge 8.00 Young, Gifted and
Classical: The Making of a Maestro 9.00
Leonora Carrington: The Lost Surrealist
10.00 The Sky at Night 10.30 Horizon:
Tim Peake Special — How to Be an
Astronaut 11.30 Secret Knowledge:
Walter Scott's Castle 12.00 Birtain's Lost
Waterlands: Escape to Swallows and
Amazons Country 1.00 Peaky Blinders
3.55 Close
TTV2

17.02

12.00 Mr Bean 12.30 Merry Christmas Mr Bean 1.00 You've Been Framed! With Bells Onl 1.25 You've Been Framed at Christmas 12.00 Take Me Out Celebrity Christmas Special 3.05 I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out Orl Here! 4.35 Film: Yogi Bear (2010) 5.35 FYI Daily 5.40 Film: Yogi Bear (2010) 5.35 FYI Daily 5.40 Film: Yogi Bear (2010) 6.10 Film: Mr Bean's Holiday (2007) 7.10 FYI Daily 7.15 Film: Mr Bean's Holiday (2007) 8.00 Film: The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift (2006) 9.00 FYI Daily 3.05 Film: The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift (2006) 10.05 Family Guy 10.35 I'm a Celebrity: Extra Camp 11.35 Family Guy 12.05 American Dail 12.35 Film: Carrie (2013) 1.35 FYI Daily 1.40 Film: Carrie (2013) 1.35 FYI Daily 1.40 Film: Carrie (2013) 2.30 Teleshopping

ITV3

2.45 Film: Columbo Goes to the Guillotine (1989) 2.45 Film: Ben-Hur (1959) 3.45 FYI Daily 3.50 Film: Ben-Hur (1959) 7.00 The History of Mr Polly 9.00 Endeavour 11.00 Lewis 1.00 The Knock 3.00 The History of Mr Polly 4.00 On the Buses 5.50 ITV3 Nightscreen

ITV4

1.05 Film: The Last Sunset (1961) 2.10 FYI Daily 2.15 Film: The Last Sunset (1961) 3.20 Film: Paranoia (2013) 4.20 FYI Daily 4.25 Film: Paranoia (2013) FYI Daily 4.25 Film: Paranoia (20/3) 5.25 Film: The Man with the Golden Gun (1974) 6.25 FYI Daily 6.30 Film: The Man with the Golden Gun (1974) 8.00 Film: A View to a Kill (1985) 9.05 FYI Daily 3.10 Film: A View to a Kill (1985) 9.05 FYI Daily 3.10 Film: Species (1995) 11.40 FYI Daily 11.45 Film: Species (1995) 11.40 FYI Daily 11.45 Film: Species (1995) 12.50 Film: Universal Soldier: Day of Reckoning (2012) 1.50 FYI Daily 11.55 Film: Universal Soldier: Day of Reckoning (2012) 3.00 Teleshopping E4

12.00 Film: A Turtle's Tale: Sammy's 12.00 Film. A times Tale. Saminy S Adventures (2010) 1.45 Rude(ish) Tube Shorts 2.00 Frozen at Christmas 3.00 The Goldbergs 4.30 The Big Bang Theory 9.00 Film: Prometheus (2012) 11.25 Gogglebox 12.30 The Inbetweeners 1.35 Rude Tube 2.35 First Dates Hotel

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FILM CHOICES

The Christmas Gift, Channel 5, 12pm

A cold-hearted architect is sent to assess a small town for possible redevelopment as a ski resort, and decides to take his daughter along on the trip. But before long, their warm welcome by the residents begins to melt his frosty facade, turning him against his boss and the company's unscrupulous plans. Drama, starring John Denver, Jane Kaczmarek and Kurtwood Smith. (1986)

TUESDAY

Merry Ex-mas, Channel 5, 1.30pm
During a blizzard at Christmas, Noelle finds herself stranded with her ex-husband, forcing them to finally face their unresolved feelings for each other. Drama, starring Kristy Swanson. (2014)

WEDNESDAY

Guess Who's Coming to Christmas, Channel 5, 12pm

A cynical rock star receives a letter from a young fan, inviting him to spend the festive season with the voungster and his family and asking if he will perform at the local Christmas concert. With his public image in need of a boost, he reluctantly agrees to the request, but unexpectedly finds himself warming to his hosts' holiday spirit. Comedy, with Drew Lachey. (2013)



THURSDAY

An Unexpected Christmas, Channel 5, 3.20pm Newlyweds the Fabers plan to host their first Christmas together and want everything to be perfect for their visiting relatives. However, Cynthia learns she is pregnant ahead of schedule and Steve suddenly loses his job, so the couple decide to hide the news from their families. Festive comedy, starring Susie Abromeit, Dillon Casey and Erin Gray. (2016)

Once Upon a Christmas, Channel 5, 1,35pm When a princess escapes her entourage and explores New York over Christmas, she meets a young man who shows her his side of the city. ntic drama, starring Briana Evigan and Paul

Modern confectioners discover their sweet tooth

n a couple of weeks, most of us will probably be sick of the sight of food and drink, in particular

But before we begin the annual season of overindulgence, the Sweetmakers are back on our screens to take us on a journey into the past.

Following the success of their Tudor Treat, Victorian Treat and Georgian Treat shows on BBC Two earlier this year, the four modern confectioners will recreate and reinvent past Christmas treats.

Award-winning chocolatiers Paul A Young and Diana Short, bespoke cake decorator and owner of Pretty Gorgeous Cake Company Cynthia Stroud, and sweet consultant and candy creator Andy Baxendale will use original recipes and equipment to whip up some of the bestsellers from yuletides of the past.

From candy canes, sugar mice and fudge, to yule logs, chocolate coins and selection boxes, sweet treats have become an integral part of our festive celebrations.

The quartet will discover how their predecessors helped come up with many of the culinary festive traditions that we enjoy today.

Guided by food historian and writer Dr Annie Gray and social historian and broadcaster Emma Dabiri, the Sweetmakers start by uncovering the mystery of what a sugarplum is – and it has nothing to do with the fruit.

They then decorate a series of exquisite Twelfth Cakes, which were the Georgian precursors of the Victorian Christmas Cake and date back to the medieval period.

They were at the height of their popularity with the wealthy elite when John Mollard wrote his cookery book in 1803.

Back then, it was the custom for each guest at a Twelfth Day get together to be assigned the role of a particular character by choosing a card at random from a pack and take on the identity for the whole night.

cake, which was usually very large and decorated with two crowns for the king and queen and sugar paste or wax images of the other characters

As they move into the Victorian era, our confectioners encounter the massive gulf between rich and poor. They create treats for both, beginning with one of Queen Victoria's favourites – Boar's Head

Then they create ielly pistols and sugar mice which were accessible to everyone in the 1900s, even children with just a few pennies to

Finally, they'll explore the wealth of chocolate novelties launched in the 1920s, including the predecessor of the modern Christmas favourite the Chocolate

The Terry's 'Dessert Chocolate The Terry's Dessert Chocolate Apple' was made from 1926 before being outshone by the company's Chocolate Orange, which eventually led to the halt in production of the apple in 1954.



The Sweetmakers at Christmas, Friday, BBC2, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY Hatton Garden

In April 2015, a gang of ageing criminals pulled off an audacious burglary in the heart of London's diamond district, getting away with jewellery and cash. The crime certainly captured the public's imagination - it's already inspired two films, with another, starring Michael Caine and Ray Winstone currently in the works. It's also the inspiration for this four-part drama from Little Boy Blue writer Jeff Pope, which is showing across consecutive evenings. The first episode introduces us to the gang, played by actors including Timothy Spall, Kenneth Cranham and Brian F O'Byrne, as they plan their ingenious heist. But the series won't be about glorifying their actions, as it goes on to explore the tensions within the group - and the impact of the robbery on their victims.

TUESDAY

The World's Most Expensive Presents Channel 4, 9pm

some of those people with a habit of spending a fortune on an extravagant Christmas, including one individual who shelled out £615,000 on diamo encrusted tree toppers. Tonight, the latest edition

looks at what these kinds of big spenders may be planning on putting under the tree this yuletide, while cameras follow craftsmen and women producing lavish gifts - which have sizeable price tags to match. These include a 24-carat gold-plated bike worth a whopping £250,000. There's also a look at the dog owner who has big ideas to impress the guests at a glitzy party - namely dressing their beloved pooch in a specially made £40,000 ball

WEDNESDAY Mary Berry's Country House Secrets BBC1, 8pm

In the final episode of the series. Mary visits Goodwood House, home to the March family, famous for their iconic horse racing and motoring events. She is taken on a thrilling lan of Goodwood motor circuit by Lord March, before attending one of his infamous dinner parties where 300 guests dine in style in splendid state rooms. Mary also learns more about the Estate's organic farm, before preparing a Coq-au-Vin and a four tier cake for a cricket tea set in one of the oldest cricket clubs in the world. Last in

Harrogate: A Yorkshire Christmas Channel 5, 9pm

The Yorkshire spa town of Harrogate has frequently topped the list of Britain's 'happiest places to live', so as Christmas approaches does that mean the streets are overflowing with festive cheer? Or are some locals feeling more stressed than seasonal?
This two-part programme meets some of the

shoppers don't abandon

business owners who are fighting to ensure that

Harrogate's independent boutiques and tea rooms for big out-of-town centres or the internet at this important time - and one way they hope to give visitors a unique experience is through the annual Christma windows competition Meanwhile, a local college is also running its own contest to design a sculpture to be

the town's

decorations

The Apprentice: Why I Fired Them BBC1, 8pm

Giving a robot two different names, running out of booze in a corporate box at Wemblev Stadium and filming a modern family car advertisement in a Norman fort are just some of the fatal errors committed by this year's Apprentice candidates Now, with the final just days away and Lord Sugar on the cusp of choosing his new business partner this programme offers viewers the chance to look back on the candidates who fell before the final hurdle. Helped by previously unseen insights from his eagle-eyed lieutenants Karren Brady and Claude Littner, Lord Sugar leads us through the best and worst decisions made by the wannabe business moguls. He also looks back on the boardroom bust-ups, and explains how he came to his decisions on who would hear those famous words 'You're Fired!'.

FRIDAY

Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast Channel 4, 8pm

Jamie Oliver tutors guest Sarah Millican on recreating her favourite microwave meal, while Jimmy Doherty builds a soft-serve ice-cream machine for a child's birthday party.

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²³C

O

What is the full form of i.e.?

variety is the bottlenosed? 10. Whose voice does Plato use in The

Republic?

How is the herb Artemisia dracunculus

Of which US state is Helena the capital?

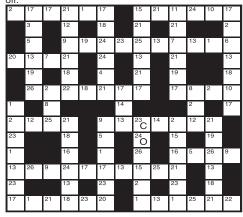
Which mammal's most commonly-seen

10

12

13 26

6.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION

¹ D	² M	³ P	⁴ W	⁵G	⁶ E	⁷ B	ီင	°S	10 J	11 L	12 U	13 H
14	15 V	16 O	¹⁷ F	¹⁸	19 R	²⁰	²¹	²² Z	²³ N	²⁴	²⁵ Q	²⁶ K

Which Bizet opera was based on a story by

Who wrote the film The Misfits for Marilyn

In which US city is the counterpart of

Which country is immediately north of

London's Cleopatra's Needle? Of what is a dyne a unit?

Quiz

Panama?

Prosper Merimee?

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Double Crossword

Cryptic Clues: Across

- 3. Game bird is all
- ruffled (9)
- 8. Customs
- applications (4) 9. Tropic island
- produce (9)
- 10. Where you must go if you get time (6)
- 11. Put your towel, if not your shirt, on it (5)
- 14. Superstitious attraction (5)
- 15. Adjust the sails or
- dock (4) 16. Gather together for
- a service (5) 18. Nothing we'd failed to settle (4)
- 20. Pursue a certain line (5)
- 21. Is old, perhaps, but dependable (5)
- 24. A crafty offer? (6)
- 25. Bad enough to cause alarm (9)
- out to make money (4)
- 27. Lady killer (9)

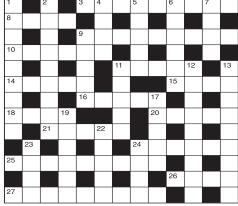
- Down 1. Not much reason for doubt (9)
- 2. Thinks time and dates are wrong (9)
- 4. I fled the country (4) 5. It's noted for its
- slowness (5) 6. Confront with a small account
- charge (6) 7. Girl in a road
- accident (4) 9. It won't stop you
- reading for long (5) 11. Gather a crowd, we hear (5)
- 12. Youngster who works on
- commission? (6,3) 13. Cigarband? (5.4)
- 17. Might be cold, yet
- good tempered (5) 19. Followed in a
- persistent way (6) 22. Bury the reconstituted nitre
- 26. The company is not 23. A fur for a foreign
 - lady (4) 24. Boats wrecked by a wind (4)

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Boudicca; 2 Hungary; 3 Michael Bentt;

- 4 Peter Lorre; 5 The Oval; 6 Zeus; 7 China;
- 8 Raspberry; 9 Poliomyelitis; 10 Bernardo

Niner: EDINBURGH



Quick Clues:

Across

- 3. Walk (9) 8. Engrave (4)
- 9. Ascribe (9) 10. Pass (6)
- 11. Traded (5)
- 14. Things pointed out (5)
- 15. Apiece (4) **16.** Kingdom (5)
- 18. Wander (4)
- 20. Go in (5)
- 21. Faithful (5)
- 24. Signal-fire (6)
- 25. Edible (9)
- 26. A fish (4)
- 27. Employees (9)

22. Repeated (5) 23. Urn (4) 24. Melancholy (4)

19. Boa (6)

Down

1. Sitting (9) 2. 8-sided (9)

4. Ceremony (4)

9. A flower (5)

speaking (5) 12. Strategist (9)

Coalesce (5)
 Marriageable (6)
 Obligation (4)

11. Slow manner of

13. Pungency (9) 17. Confused fight (5)

Sudoku

		3		2				5
		6	4		8		7	
7		8			5	4		
4				6		9		7
		9						
		1		8			5	6
8		7	3			5		9
	1				6	7		
2				4		6		8

Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains

- 1	LA.	ST	W		K'				
;	SC	LL	JTI	10	١S	>			
	7	2	8	5	3	6	4	1	9
	5	4	3	2	9	1	6	8	7
	9	6	1	8	7	4	3	5	2
	3	1	7	9	6	5	8	2	4
	4	8	5	1	2	3	7	9	6
	6	9	2	4	8	7	5	3	1
	1	7	6	3	5	2	9	4	8
	8	5	4	7	1	9	2	6	3
	2	3	9	6	4	8	1	7	5

Halesowen Chronicle

Thursday, December 7, 2017

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Sack; 3 Triangle; 8 Eats;
9 Aversion; 11 Made advances; 13 Relays;
14 Stroli; 17 Putting-green; 20 Waited on;
21 Zany; 22 Minatory; 23 Brae.
Down: 1 Steamers; 2 Citadel; 4 Revive; 5 Apron stage; 6 Guide; 7 Eons; 10 Easy street;
12 Blantyre; 15 Open-air, 16 Indoor, 18 Union;
19 Swim. QUICK - Across: 1 Lon; 3 Activate;
8 Tier; 9 Headland; 11 Misrepresent; 13 Themes;
14 Proper; 17 Amelioration; 20 Confound;
21 Base; 22 Derisory; 23 Weir. Down: 1 Intimate;
2 Oversee; 4 Cheery; 5 Industrial; 6 Again;
7 Eddy; 10 Rebellious; 12 Grandeur; 15 Primate;
16 Joiner; 18 Minor; 19 Iced.

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters. gives an alarm.

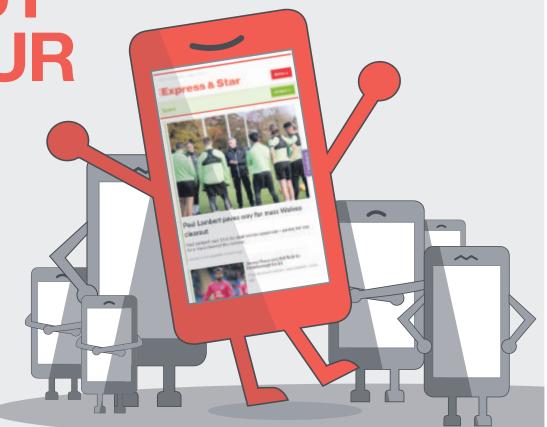
gives a second alarm, gives an obsession. 1536 42672

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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Embracing Eden's winter delights

The Eden Project is best known for its impressive biomes, recreating the rainforest and Mediterranean climates where delicate and exotic plants flourish in the depths of the rough, Cornish countryside.

But a treat is in store for those visiting in December, as the Winter Festival continues.

It's the perfect time to visit the Eden Project in Bodelva and embrace the delights of the changing season. Surrounding the biomes, there are many spectacular autumn sights, from feathery gold and crimson leaves along the Land Train route to the

stunning acers in the Japanese Swale Garden. Few of us have space for our own biome, but the outdoor gardens offer plenty of inspiration for even the most amateur gardener.

BARREN

In the Wild Cornwall area, there are quiet paths and natural borders which celebrate the wealth of the county's landscapes, habitats and wildlife. It's also a reminder of the site's transformation from a barren, former clay pit to the 'eighth wonder of the world', now seen by millions of visitors since opening in March 2001.

Eden is home to nearly two million plants and more than 5,000 varieties of plants within its 30 acres and claims to be 'a year-round horticultural extravaganza'. For our October visit, there was certainly plenty to wonder at as we explored the outdoor areas, accompanied by labrador Bonnie.

Eden is dog-friendly apart from the biomes and certain indoor areas and we were thrilled to meet dozens of four-legged friends during the day. There are water bowls, doggie bins and shaded car park spaces available, making it easy to take your pet along too.





There is also a great deal to interest children and, being half term, there were hundreds of families, like us, enjoying a day out in the fresh air. With pasties and ice creams on offer, it was pretty much perfect.

The most popular attraction for us was the ice rink which had just opened ready for the Winter Festival. Skating is on offer through to February 18 and a 40-minute general session costs £7 for adults and £6 for children, including skate hire.

While our two burned off some energy, we took turns to have another peek inside the biomes. Many of the other visitors were locals, it seemed - a special pass is

available for residents of Cornwall and Devon - and so there really must be something new to discover each time. The views inside the structures are breathtaking with something different to admire from every angle. In the rainforest biome there are groups of tropical roulrouls (crested partridges) which go about their business oblivious to the droves of visitors.

For the Christmas season, the biomes will feature festive plantings and host the dazzling Festival of Light and Sound on selected dates until December 30.

From 5-8pm, the Mediterranean Biome will be transformed with beautifully choreographed music

and dancing light projections. The show is included in normal admission fees. Meanwhile, in the Bainforest Biome there is a magical after-dark experience and the chance to catch a rare glimpse of the rainforest by night from the 50m high Lookout.

Plus, there are craft workshops before the festivities kick off. Throughout the Winter Festival, there is an array of seasonal food in the cafes, plus plenty of Christmas shopping. Until December 24, visitors can see Father Christmas and his elves.

For full details visit www.edenproject.com

BY LIZ GRAY

Star Reader Travel

Mamma Mia!

Inspired by the storytelling magic of ABBA's songs, from Dancing Queen and Take A Chance On Me to Super Trouper and Thank You For The Music, Mamma Mia! is an enchanting tale of family and friendship unfolding on a Greek Island paradise. On the eve of her wedding, a daughter's quest to discover the identity of her father unexpectedly brings together three men from her mother's past..

Mamma Mia! has now been seen by over 50 million people worldwide setting the record for premiering in more cities worldwide faster than any other musical in history

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Matilda

This much-loved story is a must-see theatre show. Guinness Book of Records entry for the most Olivier Awards won by any show, Matilda the Musical was nominated in all ten categories in the 2012 Oliviers and broke a 20 year record by taking seven titles including Best New Musical, Best Director, Best Actor and Best Actress.

This RSC production of Roald Dahl's famous Matilda has wall to wall rave reviews, with sparkling writing by Dennis Kelly and outstanding songs by the singer/comedian/songwriter Tim Minchin Enjoy Matilda the Musical at the Cambridge Theatre in London now!

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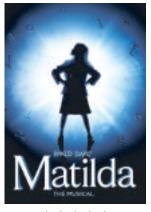
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No room for a proper tree at Christmastime?

By Hannah Stephenson

STRUGGLING to squeeze in a Christmas tree that's too tall and wide for the space in your home, leaving you reaching for the sec-ateurs in an effort to cut it down to size?

Bigger the better might seem like a good approach when it comes to choosing a Christmas tree, but squashed-in probably isn't the look you're really hoping for, so it's far better to give a little thought to what size and style of tree is going to be best.

Here, David Mitchell, Christmas tree external better to give a little thought to what size and style of tree is going to be best.

pert and buying manager for horticulture at Wyevale Garden Centres (wyevalegarden-centres.co.uk), talks us through six things

to consider when choosing your tree.. 1. How tall should you go?

to consider when choosing your tree...

1. How tall should you go?

The first thing you need to consider is ceiling height, says David Mitchell, Christmas tree expert and buying manager for horticulture at Wyevale Garden Centres.

"A lot of people have no idea how tall their ceiling is, and when you imagine a tree in a certain space, it's easy to get over-ambitious as to what you can fit in there," he says. "You also have to remember that the stand is going to add perhaps another six inches to the overall height of the tree, and quite often you find that you are having to cut the top off, or something that comprocut the top off, or something that compro-mises the shape of the tree. So measure the tree and make allowances for the stand."

2. How wide can it really be?

"A lot of the trees are coming through very wide. The Nordmann, by its very nature, is a wide variety with a wide skirt around the base. We've been doing pruning work in the fields to help keep it within cer-tain limits," says David.

"A lot of people want something that's big, bushy and deluxe, but as a general trend, we do want them slimmer and we try

to accommodate that.

as what style of tree is it?

If your space is very restricted and you want an extremely slim tree, Wyevale offers a Swedish style Nordmann, which costs slightly less than a traditional Nordmann – but there won't be as many of them and they call out first they sell out first.

"Back in 2014, we recognised there was very much a trend for artificial trees at that time that were very stripped out and minimalist, following a Scandinavian approach, where you could see the light coming through between the branches.

"We decided to do a version of that with our living trees, so we were selecting trees which had that layered effect, and prune in the field to get that shape and layered effect."

Alternatively, the Fraser fir has a much more narrow profile, which has a more columnal figure and upright habit, with



Swedish-style Christmas tree from Wyevale Garden Centres

branches sweeping upwards rather than

4. What sort of scent are you after? For many people, the fragrances of the festive season are part of the appeal, so think about whether you want your tree to

'You also have to consider whether you want something highly scented, which might steer you towards a Fraser fir. You can get artificial scents to put in the tree, but there's nothing like the real thing," notes David.

5. Avoid clipping catastrophes If you are going to attempt to trim back

your own tree, there are rules about prun-

ing.
"Ultimately, you have to cut where is necessary to make it fit the space, but there's a

tidy way of doing it," says David. "If you cut any given branch half way down its length fairly unceremoniously, then it's going to look as if it's been cut off.

"If you cut it in between the nodes, taking off individual 'fingers' of the tree, or find a natural break, that's always going to look better than if you cut it half way down look better than if you cut, it had way down. I wouldn't just take shears to it and cut it off. Look for a natural join. There's no risk of damaging the tree but because it's such a centrepiece, it's worth spending a bit of

If the only spot for your tree is by a radiator, you have to accept that it's going to dry out. This means it will need more waterand

you're likely to see a fair bit of needle-drop

6. Consider some alternatives

If you simply don't have room for a proper tree, there are other alternatives,



A narrow tree will save space



Twiggy alternative to a larger tree

such as long dogwood-style twigs or other branches which you could put in a vase and decorate with baubles to give the room a festive air. Many garden centres also sell artificial thin trees which are almost like a standard, just with branches on the upper

standard, just with branches on the upper third of the tree.
"There are a lot of artificial trees which have that stark white Betula jacquemontii (silver birch) look," says David. "It gives that stripped out, minimalistic effect. A real one in a pot would be OK indoors for a couple of weeks in December. You can decorate

it and dress it up.

"I'm very much coming over to the notion of having a Christmas tree outside as well, because some of the Christmas lights are very well suited to indoor or outdoor use, and they can be solar powered, so you can have a set of lights."

Keeping your children and data safe at **Christmas**

IN an increasingly digital world, more and more toys and devices aimed at children now have internet-connected technology. As the Christmas shopping season begins, many parents will be considering buying them for their children.

for their children.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) supports innovation and creative uses of personal data, but this cannot be at the expense of people's privacy and legal rights, whatever their age. Concerns have been raised in recent months that the growth in toys containing sensors, microphones, cameras, data storage and other multi-media capabilities could put the privacy and sefatu of children at risk.

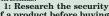
age and other multi-media capabilities could put the privacy and safety of children at risk.

There have also been data protection concerns relating to some products over what data is collected, by whom, where it is stored and how it is secured.

The ICO wants parents, guardians and others to conceided data protecting and private rights data protecting and private rights.

guardians and others to consider data protection and privacy issues in the same way they would check on the safety of presents they are planning to give to their children.
Unlike Santa, those looking to hack into your devices don't care, whether you've heep

care whether you've been naughty or nice, so the ICO has the following advice for grown-ups considering buying smart toys and devices this Christmas: 1: Research the security



1: Research the security
of a product before buying
Doing your homework before buying a connected
device should allow you to recognise those with poor
security. You should also look to see how a product will
be updated in the future if a security issue is identified.
2: Take care when shopping online
At this time of year, when online shopping is nearing its peak, scammers may be more likely to try to
access your personal information such as bank account
or credit card details. Only use secure sites when shopping online – secure sites usually carry the padlock
symbol.

3. Take your time

3. Take your time
Don't wait until Christmas Day, when excited children will want to just turn on a new toy or device and skip as much of the set-up process as they can. Take the time beforehand to read the manual and familiarise yourself with the security and privacy options available to you.

4. Change passwords and usernames from de-

fault
Default password or code protection will only provide
the most basic security. Default credentials for many
devices can be freely available
on the web. Use a different
password for each account



and device.

5. Is your router secure? Your router is the first line of defence on the perimeter of your home network. If you have devices connected to your network, the default set-tings of your router might be exposing them to the internet

and therefore everyone else.
Create a strong password.

6. If there's a two-step

identification option – use it
Two-step authentication offers you an additional
layer of security when logging in to an online service.
7. Be camera aware – you never know who's

7. Be camera aware – you never know who's watching

Some toys and devices are fitted with web cameras. The ability to view footage remotely is both their biggest selling point and, if not set up correctly, potentially their biggest weakness.

8: Location, location, location

One of the main selling points of children's smart watches is the ability for parents to know where their children are at all times. However, if this isn't done securely, then others might have access to this data as well. Immediately get rid of default location tracking and GPS settings.

and GPS settings.

9: Bluetooth ache
Some toys and devices have been found to have unencrypted Bluetooth connections which can be easily ssed by strangers. Consider disabling this in a de-

ce's settings.

10: Have a secure Christmas

By taking some time and care beforehand and following our advice, you can still see a child's face light up when they open their new, web-connected Christmas present, safe, secure and happy.

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Volvo wins big at Car Tech Awards

Volvo has again proved its technological leadership, winning four awards at the Car Tech Awards 2018.

Volvo was named Car Technology Brand of the Year for the second year running, while the Volvo XC60 was awarded Best Safety Technology for its revolutionary Steering Support system, Best Sat-Nav for its Sensus Navigation, and Best Safest Car as a result of its remarkable Euro NCAP crash test result.

Technology

The Car Tech Awards celebrate the best in-car technology launched over the past 12 months, as voted for by the experts from buyer's guide Carbuyer and technology website Alphr.

Stuart Milne, editor of Carbuyer, said: "Volvo's success in the Car Tech Awards is remarkable. The company scooped Car Technology Brand of the Year for the second year in succession.

"Our judges were impressed by the way Volvo refuses to rest on its laurels, developing a series of products and philosophies that build on its Vision 2020, that no one will be killed or seriously injured in a new Volvo by 2020. These include its commitment to stop producing cars powered solely by petrol and diesel starting from 2019 – a scheme recognised by the United Nations – as well as the launch of an evasive steering system in its new XC60 and forging a close relationship with Google to develop better-connected cars. This is in addition to the continual and incremental improvement in new car technology that all customers can enjoy." Every XC60 comes with Volvo's ground-



The Sensus Navigation System was praised for its clarity



Volvo's success in the Car Tech Awards is remarkable

breaking Steering Support technology as standard. This automatically provides steering assistance in an emergency to help avoid potential collisions. The judges were impressed, saying: "It should come as little surprise that a brand so closely associated with safety should take our Best Safety Technology award.

"The new Steering Support system is a development of the firm's City Safety system. In situations where braking alone won't avoid a collision, the XC60 is able to take charge of steering. With the system, Volvo claims a 45 per cent reduction in rear-end frontal

The XC60 was named Best Safest Car



Every XC60 comes with Volvo's ground-breaking Steering Support technology as standard

after its outstanding Euro NCAP crash test result, where it scored 98 per cent for adult occupant protection and 95 per cent for its safety assistance features.

The Sensus Navigation system – also fitted as standard to every model – was praised by the judges as well. "Its display is a model of clarity and uses the same stunning,

efficient design the brand is fast becoming synonymous with.

"It's not style over substance, though. The large screen makes destinations easy to input, and efficient and accurate routes are displayed.

"The whole system is responsive, simple to use and sets a new benchmark."



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Model shown Grandland X Launch Edition 12 (130PS) Turbo Start/Stop OTR £28,245. #Fuel consumption information is official government environmental data, tested in accordance with the relevant EU directive. Official EU-regulated test data is provided for comparison purposes and actual performance will depend on driving style, road conditions and other non-technical factors. Correct at time of going to press.

Vauxhall's Grandland X is very well put together



Grandland X has a robust stance, with accentuated wheel arches and a wide front grille

By Carmel Stewart

The Grandland X is an important vehicle for Vauxhall, completing as its does the company's crossover trio of SUVs which began with the mid-sized 4WD Mokka X, followed by the compact 2WD Crossland X.

You would be forgiven for thinking that the Daddy of the range was a robust 4x4 but, in fact, it comes in 2WD only with an optional electronic grip control which adapts the torque distribution for optimum traction, depending on which of the driving modes has been selected - normal, snow mud or sand.

Similar in styling to the slightly smaller Mokka X, the Grandland X has a robust stance, with accentuated wheel arches and a wide front grille with a sill plate below plus slim LEDs front and rear. A high waist and chrome highlights add an aerodynamic appeal

Inside where there is space enough for five occupants, the driving position is elevated, the modern, well laid-out dash uncomplicated and the ambient lighting tastefully sufficient.
At the rear there is 514 litres of easy-load boot

space which ups to 1,652 litres with the rear seat backs dropped down.

Engine choices are confined to two turbo units a 1.2litre 130ps three-cylinder turbo petrol and a 1.6litre 120ps four-cylinder turbo diesel. Both can



Getting connected is easy in Grandland X

be combined with either a six-speed manual or six-speed automatic transmission. Selection will come down to personal preference, with the diesel returning an official average of 70.6mpg mpg and the petrol 54.4mpg on 17-inch wheels. More engine options will be added next year.

On the road there are no real highs or lows. The ride is comfortable, the cabin quiet, the engines more than adequate, although the suspension is not as all absorbing as some of its rivals.

The Grandland X, while not exciting to drive, is well put together with a very decent standard spec. It will deliver its occupants to their required destination in unruffled comfort but it is entering into a very tough SUV market place which has doubled in size during the past six or seven years. Its rivals are long-established, so Vauxhall will need to sharpen its automotive elbows if it is to make an impact with this

But the newness of the Grandland X can also be considered a plus as many buyers like to drive the latest model and it is following in the tyre treads of the increasingly popular Mokka X.

Its specification list includes all the driving aids of any self-respecting modern vehicle: automatic cruise control with pedestrian detection and automatic emergency braking, driver drowsiness alert, and advanced park assist plus the option of a heated steering wheel, heated front and rear seats and smart tailgate, that opens with a flick of the foot.

All that, oh so vital, fingertip connectivity is also available through Vauxhall On Star, so you not only have automatic crash response alerting the emergency services should the airbags be deployed but can also book an hotel room, find a parking space and charge your smartphone wirelessly as well as access emails, phone messages, Google maps and the like thanks to the Apple CarPlay and Android

Prices start at £22,310 with LED daytime running lights, camera-based lane departure warning, road sign recognition, sat nay, eight-inch touch screen and air con all fitted as standard

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By Darren Cassey

The BMW 3 Series has long been one of the top contenders for fleet drivers looking to pair badge appeal, practicality and a great drive. Those who traditionally defaulted to diesel might do well to give the 330e a chance – its low emissions result in a Benefit in Kind rating of just nine per cent.

It's a plug-in hybrid, which means that if you have the ability to charge the battery each night it could cost very little to run, especially if you don't drive very far.

Those already familiar with the 3 Series will feel at home in the 330e – the interior is almost identical to what you'll find elsewhere in the range, apart from a couple of hybrid-specific buttons.

However, that hybrid technology is of particular interest because it opens up a new engine choice that'll be very tempting to business users and those who do a lot of mixed-length trips.

Power comes from a 2.0-litre turbo petrol engine and an electric motor. At low speeds when you're running on pure electric it's a pleasant experience thanks to the peace and quiet, but the motor is punchy meaning you can dart into gaps and out of junctions with ease.



It's a plug-in hybrid and could cost very little to run

And once the engine kicks in not a lot changes. If you're not listening out for it you'll barely notice you're no longer running on electric alone, and thanks to the fact the electric motor works in tandem with the engine performance is decent too. There's 248bhp on tap meaning that, in theory, you get economy and performance in equal measure.

However, it is rather reliant on you using it 'properly'. In long distance driving we saw economy drop below 40mpg, but on shorter journeys with a fully recharged battery it's feasible to see twice that.

Generally, eco-focussed hybrids are pretty dull to drive. But there are plenty of manufacturers who use the electric motor to offer high performance thrills. With the 330e, BMW manages to tread the line between both camps pretty well.

With a fully charged battery working together with the 2.0-litre petrol engine, the 3 Series feels plenty fast enough and is more enjoyable to wring out than its diesel equivalents. It's quite heavy on account of the batteries, but you can't notice that out on the road.

While many hybrids like to shout about their green credentials, the 330e goes for the subtle approach. The only way to tell from the outside is the 'e' badge on the rear, an e-drive badge behind the rear windows and the gate for the electric motor, which sits behind the near-side front whole.

That means you get the typical BMW sophistication while flying under the radar with your penny pinching. Inside, it's standard BMW fare, which is by no means a bad thing. Our test car came with a blood red leather interior, which divided opinion but we loved. The dashboard is a quite simple design, and BMW hasn't fallen into the trap of trying desperately to remove all buttons in the age of the touchscreen. It means the important dials remain and only lesser used items are relegated to the infotainment system.

Because the cost of hybrid systems is quite high, it's difficult for manufacturers to offer budget versions of their petrol-electric models. Therefore, the standard spec on the 330e is pretty lofty, with our car getting the M Sport treatment

As a result, our test model came with 18-inch alloy wheels, leather upholstery throughout and LED lighting front and rear.

BMW has absolutely nailed the premium hybrid formula. With the 330e you get all that BMW refinement in an eco-friendly package. Add in the fact that it's low-cost for business users and that it's fantastic to drive and you've got a compelling buy. If you do regular, long motorway jaunts diesel might still be the better choice, but for mixed journeys the hybrid could be your new best friend.





Walsall's 13-15 years team who brought home the silver medal from Scotland

The under-12 show off their silver medals won in the team discipline

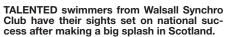
Georgia Baker in action. Pic: Scottish Swimming

Robyn Swatman, gold medal winner in the 13-15 figures

Swimming team in sync to make a competition splash

SPORTING FEATURE

"The club has always been strong but we have seen a lot more people take an interest, particularly since the London Olympics.



The club, who have their base at the town's Gala Baths, returned from the Scottish National Synchronised Swimming Championships with a haul of medals from both individual and team competitions.

Walsall won gold in the under-12s team event and also took silver in the 13-15 years team category.

Georgia Baker finished at the front of a competitive field

in the solo under-12s competition.

She was followed onto the top step of the podium by England youth team members Olivia Baker and Robyn Swatman, who took the 13-15 years duet.

Competitive

Olivia Baker also took bronze in the 13-15 years solo event, while Georgia teamed up with Taliah Alves to win silver in the under-12s duet.

suver in the under-12s duet.
"The team did brilliantly in Scotland and got some really
good results," said head coach Amy Baker. "It was particu-larly pleasing as the event attracts some of the biggest clubs

in the country and the competition is flercely competitive.
"For Georgia Baker to win the under-12s solo was a huge achievement. She is a swimmer with great potential."
Walsall's Scottish success followed a similarly strong

showing in last month's Midlands Championships, held at their home pool. Alves won gold in the under-12s figures competition, with Georgia Baker winning silver to com-plete a one-two for the hosts in that category.



Medal winners from the nationals in Gloucester

The duo then teamed up to win gold in the duets event, with team-mates Katie Lopez and Olivia Timms taking bronze, while Walsall achieved a clean sweep in the 13-15 years figures with Swatman taking victory ahead of Olivia Baker and Hannah Birch. The latter combined with Olivia Baker to win gold in the 13-15 years duet.

Walsall also won big in the team competitions, with victories for the 13-15 years squad in the exercise and free categories and the 15-18 years team in the combination event. The under-12s team won gold in the free competition while the Muppets squad, whose routine is choreographed

while the Muppets squad, whose routine is choreographed to music from the TV show, claimed silver.

Walsall Synchro Club were formed in 1972 and currently have close to 100 swimmers on their books.

"The club has always been strong but we have seen a lot more people take an interest, particularly since the London Olympics," said head coach Baker. "It's got to the point where we don't really advertise an-

more. People come to me on an almost daily basis asking if their child can have a trial.

"Many have a background in dance or gymnastics and want to give synchronised swimming a go. At the moment we have some really, really talented girls at the club. Both



Robyn Swatman and Olivia Baker's routine

Olivia Baker and Robyn Swatman are part of the England squad at their age group and we are hopeful of getting a few more called-up should things go well at the nationals."

The success fuelled confidence ahead of the National

Championships in Gloucester last weekend – and more medals followed.

Georgia Baker and Taliah Alves collected a silver medal

in the 12 and under duets, with Olivia Timms and Kate Lopes back in ninth. Robyn Swatman and Olivia Baker col-lected a bronze in the 13-15s duets.

lected a bronze in the 13-15s duets.

There was a silver medal in the 12 and unders teams. The 13-15 team finished fourth out of 17 entrants
Individually, Georgia Baker finished sixth and Taliah Alves eighth in the under-12s figures, from 130 competitors, Olivia Baker and Robyn Swatman, both only 13, ended 11th and 13th respectively, from 178 in the 13-15s. In the solos, Georgia Baker narrowly missed out on third position in the under-13s, finishing just ahead of Talia Alves, Swatman and Olivia Baker finished eighth and ninth respectively.

respectively.

Georgia, Taliah, Olivia Baker and Robyn were selected to attend Phase 1 of England trials held in Bristol on Sat-

Ofosu-Ayeh no closer to return, says Nuno

WOLVES head coach Nuno Espirito Santo has revealed Phil Ofosu-Ayeh is on closer to being considered for selection. The 26-year-old full-back joined on a free transfer in the summer after leaving German side Eintracht Braunschweig but is yet to play for the club due to an ankle injury.

Braunschweig but is yet to play for the club due to an ankle injury. It was thought last month that he could return before the end of the year, but his recovery programme has not gone as planned.

Nuno hinted the club may have to cut their losses if the situation does not take an upturn soon, and said: "It's tough. The programme that is being done with him is trying to increase his load of running. But he still has pain. "We have to be very cautious, not only because of this particular injury, but the way that Phil – for the last year – has struggled.

"He needs to settle down and solve, definitely, the problems that he has. Then we have to make a decision."

Ofosu-Ayeh underwent ankle surgery in early September. Born in Germany, he represents Ghana and has one cap for them.

Bucks boss rules out a move for Lescott

will not be signing for AFC Telford United, club sources have revealed.

The 35-year-old former Wolves, Albion and Villa defender is without a club after being released from Sunderland at the end of last season – and

After the signing of former Wolves striker Sylvan Ebanks-Blake, there was speculation that former Molineux favourite Lescott – who has also had spells with Everton, Manchester City and AEK Athens – would also end up at the New Bucks Head.

Telford boss Rob Edwards played with Lescott at Wolves but stated 'nothing will happen'. It is believed though that the Bucks chief is on the lookout for a defender.

The Birmingham-born centre-half played 26 times for England. He won two Premier League medals, the FA Cup and League Cup during five years at City – and won the First Division play-offs with Wolves in 2003.

Development work wins coach top award

A DUDLEY sports coach has picked up a top accolade. Rus Smith, who leads the development of trainers and coach developers in the Midlands for StreetGames, was named as the Coach Developer of the Year category at the 2017 UK Coaching Awards.

Recognised with him were the three coaches – Benke Blomkvist, Christian

Recognised with him were the three coaches – Benke Blomkvist, Christian Malcolm and Stephen Maguire – who led Great Britain's men's 4x100m team to gold at the 2017 World Athletics Championships. They won the High Performance Coach of the Year award.

This year marked the 20th anniversary of the showpiece annual event, held at The Honourable Artillery Company, City of London, last Thursday. Smith offers his services to the FA and the Stourbridge Football League. He has delivered to more than 1,000 learners in the last 12 months. He said: "What a honour to have been announced as Coach Developer of the Year."

What an honour to have been announced as Coach Developer of the Year."

Mark Gannon, UK Coaching CEO, said: "Rus is fully deserving of the Coach Developer of the Year award."



Swimmers in sync for making a big splash

Page 35



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Global feel as athletes make splash

THERE was an international feel to the Black Country Triathletes Splash N' Dash as athletes from home and abroad took part at Ounsdale Leisure Centre, Wombourne on Sunday.

One athlete, whose home club is Oklahoma Tri, even travelled from Germany to take on the 400m pool swim and 5km run along the Railway Walk.

First home overall was Phil Wolfe from Mammoth Lifestyle Racing for the men in a time of 22:45 with Daniel Shep-perd second in 23:22 and James Booker from Warley Wasps third in 24:16.

For the ladies the overall winner was Francesca Ryde from University Of Bir-mingham in 28:29 with BCT's Lauren Evans second in 29:43 and Amy Brammar, also University Of Birmingham in third in 29:45.

For Black Country Triathletes, Jack Tibbetts was third in the Open Male in 27:11, Tim Lake third in the Vet category in 27:44, Gary Bonner first Super Vet in 28:27, Gary Hickman, first Ut-lravet in 31:52 and Sue Payton second Super Vet in 36:39

More than 60 juniors raced in various distances depending on their age group. Black Country Triathletes took a number of the podium places.

A McLuckie break wins it for hosts

Workington 2 Stourbridge 1
STOURBRIDGE were denied a battling
away point in the final minute of added
time on Saturday in Leon Broadhurst's
700th appearance for the club.

The home side took the lead four minutes before the break with Sam Joel on hand to finish from close range. Stour's task was made harder in the

80th minute as Luke Benbow was shown a straight red for what was deemed a studs-up challenge on Gari Rowntree. Benbow's loan deal from Solihull Moors has been extended until January 30, but he will be suspended for three games from Saturday.

Shearer equalised with three minutes left as he fired in Aaron Forde's cross following good work from the midfielder

and substitute Josh Cooke.

But Workington had the final say deep into added time as Phil McLuckie was there to poke the ball home.

On Tuesday night, Glassboys lost 2-0 at Nantwich.

Town appoint new boss

FORMER Tividale manager Dean Whitehouse has taken charge of West Midlands League Premier Division strugglers Dudley Town.

Whitehouse guided Tivi to to the West Midlands title back in 2011 and had a brief spell in charge of Dudley in the late 2000s.

Richard Taylor will join Whitehouse's backroom staff team as player-coach.

Yeltz recovery led by on-loan McAtee

Halesowen Town 3 Whitby Town 1 ON-LOAN John McAtee struck twice as Halesowen came from behind to notch their first win in eight games.

The Seasiders took a fifth minute lead when Kyle Fryatt headed against the bar but tapped home the rebound.

After the disjointed start from Yeltz, McAtee

led the recovery and he went close in the 33rd minute when a 25-yard shot hit the base of the post. But McAtee was soon on target with an

Man of the match McAtee went close again four minutes before the interval, but this time Dixon

made a good save.
Yeltz went ahead in the 61st minute when sub-

Yeltz went anead in the bist minute when substitute Jack Kelly was set free down the left and his cross-shot pinged into the net.

A goal-bound shot from Whitby's Luke Bythway was blocked for a corner before McAtee made Halesowen's vital points safe by stroking into the

bottom corner with a cool 81st minute finish. McAtee then burst through again but was denied his hat-trick as Dixon made a fine save.

In injury time home goalkeeper Dan Platt saved from Matthew Tymon and Whitby substitute Keiron Weledji flashed a header wide but the well beaten visitors were left without a win in 12 outlings.

outings.
On Tuesday night, Yeltz lost 2-0 in a friendly at RAF Cosford to RAFFASRT. On Saturday Halesowen are at home to Nantwich.

KEEP HEATHENS TRACK VOW

CRADLEY Heathers bosses say they are determined to do everything they can to ensure a team takes to the track in 2018.

The perennial problem of stadium availability and fixture congestion is again the single biggest obstacle to overcome for the Heathens.

Much will depend on the number of clubs en-tering the National League for the upcoming season and how many dates are available at Mon-

season and now many dates are available at Monmore Green, Wolverhampton.

Following a meeting last Wednesday afternoon, co-promoter Gary Patchett said: "We enjoyed a very positive meeting and we are unanimously agreed we will do everything we can to keep the team on the track.

"We have some proposals we would like to



present to the other clubs when we eventually get a date for the National League AGM and then we can make some firm plans. Until then we are in a state of flux.

Issues

"We need the supporters to remain patientand we thank them for that.

"Without going into detail, the various issues we have had to face, both individually

had to face, both individually and collectively, would have made it easier to bring the current era to a close but we are committed to keeping the Heathens going despite the challenging circumstances we have faced this year.

"Our hearts are definitely ruling our heads!

"We need positivity throughout the club and, most importantly we need to be certain the sur-

most importantly, we need to be certain the sup-port will still be there for us moving forward. Whilst there are still hurdles for us to overcome and issues to address over which we have little or no control we are optimistic of a positive result Patchett added.

this winter

Top award just plain sailing



Mary Harris with son Christopher and The Princess Royal at the ceremony

A HIMLEY Hall Sailing Club A HMLET Hall Salling Cito stalwart has been honoured for her outstanding commit-ment to the sport. Mary Harris was among 58 to be presented with RYA Vol-

unteer Awards by Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal. The Princess is the pres-ident of the Royal Yachting Association, boating's national governing body. The ceremony

> Midlands DOUBLE

GLAZING

was at One Great George Harris was accompanied by

was at One Great George Street, London. Mary and husband David, from Penn, were both recog-nised with an RYA Lifetime Commitment Award for their exceptional dedication to the

ub over more than 40 years. Sadly, Mr Harris passed away in July, aged 83, a day after finding out he and his wife had been honoured. Mrs

their son Christopher.

They were nominated by their clubs and selected as winners by the RYA Honours and Awards Panel.

Before the ceremony, RYA CEO, Sarah Treseder, pre-sented Her Royal Highness with pair of marine binoculars on behalf of the RYA to mark her 30 years as president.

Lilly in pink! First home in senior race

HALESOWEN Ladies took on midable cross-country course at the Wel-combe Hills Country Park Stratford-up-on-Avon. The Ladies race consisted of a two laps course of four miles, whilst the

two laps course of four miles, whilst the men ran three laps of six miles. First home and third overall was Junior athlete Lilly Higgins in her first year in the senior race. Following her home were Masters athletes Sally Spencer in 37th, Melanie Hepke 38th, Becky Adams 60th, Simone Jones 72nd, Sarah Thompson 74th, Caroline Lambert 94th, Ellish James 101st, Stephanie Adams 118th, 130th Anna Cosimetti, and mother of Lilly, Emma Higgins 132nd, and Helen Attwood 144th. The ladies team finished sixth with the Masters in seventh of the

Attwood 144th. The ladies team finished sixth with the Masters in seventh of the 23 teams that make up division two. In the Men's race Halesowen finished in fourth place. Leading Halesowen home in 11th place was Mateusz Slivinski, with Roger Mallard in 24th, in 31st place was Junior runner Kristian Bayley, Mark Turner 34th, Adam cross 42nd, Tom Kenderdine 44th, Dave Turvey 51st. Team captain Peter Dear finished 65th, Joe Donkin 76th, Russell Cadwallader 86th, Dave Lewis 94th, Phil Scarr 109th, Matt Allen 138th, James Scarr 109th, Matt Allen 138th, James Hoult 168th, Alex Morgan 177th and Bill Nock 186th.

Andy Nock, the Birmingham and Disrict League record holder for the most number of appearances, came in 194th, Richard Guest 215th, John Hill 217th, Andy Curruthers 224th, Paul Allen 258th and Ali Grant 268th.

Indoor five-a-side league to kick off

AN all-year round football league the weather can't spoil kicks off in Stourbridge this weekend. The five-a-side league gets under way at Crystal Leisure Centre on Sunday 10, from 5-7pm.

The competition is being operated by nationwide company 5aside.co.uk. Spokesman, Sam Taylor said: "We can guarantee you a game each week, whatever the weather."

ever the weather.

Sam confirmed the league would see multiple divisions, and added: "You turn up, pay your match fee and enjoy the game."

Matches cost £30. To sign up, head to www.5aside.co.uk

The Chronicle, a Midland News Association Ltd publication, printed by the company at Ketley, Telford. Thursday, December 7, 2017

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